The Sūtra of Compassion Unboundless

The Revelation of the Bodhisattva
Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi

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Akshobhya Buddha

Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi

Reverend Moshe Reed, Servant and Prophet of Logos

Dedication

This work is dedicated to all beings who seek truth with humility, who endure suffering with courage, and who extend compassion even when certainty is impossible.

It is dedicated to the weary traveler who continues walking despite doubt, to the quiet caregiver whose kindness is unseen, to the teacher who points beyond themselves, and to the student who dares to ask sincere questions.

It is dedicated to every friend, stranger, and passing acquaintance whose patience, generosity, or simple presence has illuminated another's path, whether they knew it or not.

It is dedicated to those who have been misunderstood, to those who have misunderstood others, and to all who strive for reconciliation without abandoning wisdom.

It is dedicated to the memory of guides who refuse to become idols, who encourage direct realization rather than dependence, and whose greatest gift is teaching others to walk with their own feet.

It is dedicated to the symbolic Bodhisattva **Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi**, not as an object of attachment, but as a literary embodiment of boundless compassion, liberating wisdom, and imperturbable Suchness—a reminder that every form is ultimately a finger pointing beyond itself.

It is dedicated to the countless unnamed beings who plant trees whose shade they will never enjoy, repair roads for strangers they will never meet, prepare food for unseen guests, and perform acts of kindness without expectation of recognition.

Above all, it is dedicated to the cultivation of the **Three Great Gates**:

- **Boundless Compassion**, that embraces all beings without preference.
- **Liberating Wisdom**, that cuts through delusion while remaining humble.
- **Imperturbable Suchness**, that remains steady amid the changing conditions of life.

May these pages serve only as a raft.

May they be studied with care, practiced with sincerity, questioned with honesty, and released without regret when their purpose has been fulfilled.

May whatever goodness arises from this work contribute, however slightly, to the lessening of suffering and the flourishing of wisdom throughout the immeasurable worlds.

May all beings be happy.
May all beings be free.
May all beings awaken.

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The mind that remembers Akṣobhya becomes steady; the heart that generates Bodhicitta becomes vast; the one who realizes Suchness enters the Realm of Delight and works unceasingly for the awakening of all beings.

Homage (Namo)

Namo to Boundless Compassion,
which embraces the joyful and the sorrowful,
the known and the unknown,
friend and stranger alike,
without exhaustion and without preference.

Namo to Liberating Wisdom,
which cuts through delusion without harming beings,
which loosens attachment without destroying love,
which reveals emptiness without denying the world,
and reveals the world without abandoning emptiness.

Namo to Imperturbable Suchness,
clear as the stainless mirror,
steady as the unmoving mountain,
flowing as the river that never clings,
vast as the open sky beyond all measure.

Namo to the Buddhas of the Ten Directions,
to all bodhisattvas who labor for the freedom of beings,
to every sage whose humility exceeds their fame,
and to every anonymous act of kindness that quietly
transforms the world.

Namo to the symbolic Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi,
who appeared not to gather worship but to dissolve
attachment,
who taught not by demanding belief but by encouraging direct

realization,
who revealed that even the guide must eventually be released,
lest the finger obscure the moon toward which it points.

Namo to the Three Great Gates:

- The **Gate of Boundless Compassion**, through which the heart opens to all beings.
- The **Gate of Liberating Wisdom**, through which rigid certainty yields to clear seeing.
- The **Gate of Imperturbable Suchness**, through which the mind remains serene amid all changing conditions.

Namo to every teacher who becomes unnecessary,
every friend who encourages growth,
every stranger whose kindness arrives at the proper moment,
every child who asks honest questions,
every elder who listens before speaking,
and every seeker who walks onward despite uncertainty.

May no doctrine become a prison.

May no image become an idol.

May no certainty extinguish humility.

May no mystery extinguish compassion.

May this book be a raft for crossing rather than a burden to carry,

a lamp for the path rather than an object of possession,
a mirror for self-examination rather than a weapon in debate.

And when its pages have fulfilled their purpose,
may they be released without regret,
leaving behind only the living practice of kindness,
discernment, and equanimity.

Homage to Compassion that excludes none.
Homage to Wisdom that clings to nothing.
Homage to Suchness that neither comes nor goes.

May all beings, throughout all worlds and in every direction,
find freedom from needless suffering,
cultivate boundless compassion,
realize liberating wisdom,
abide in imperturbable Suchness,
and walk the Way for the welfare of all.

Preface

At the heart of this work stands the mysterious figure of **Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi**, an androgynous bodhisattva-like guide who appears to the seeker Moshe Reed. Throughout the narrative, she repeatedly undermines any temptation to worship her as an ultimate object. Again and again she insists that she is a symbol, a skillful means, a compassionate appearance pointing beyond herself toward direct realization. In this way, the reader is invited not merely to admire the guide but to embody the qualities she represents.

The structure of the book revolves around the Three Great Gates:

- **The Gate of Boundless Compassion**, which opens through sincere concern for the well-being of all beings without exception.
- **The Gate of Liberating Wisdom**, which opens through careful inquiry, humility, and the relinquishment of rigid attachment to concepts and identities.
- **The Gate of Imperturbable Suchness**, inspired by the imagery associated with Akṣobhya, which opens through a calm and unwavering presence amid the changing conditions of life.

These gates are presented not as separate achievements but as mutually illuminating dimensions of a single path. Compassion without wisdom may become misguided.

Wisdom without compassion may become cold. Stability without either may become indifference. Together they form a living practice rather than a fixed philosophy.

The narrative draws extensively upon symbolic imagery: mirrors that retain no stain, rivers that never cling to yesterday's waters, mountains that remain unmoved by storms, bowls whose emptiness allows them to serve, and swords that cut ignorance rather than living beings. These images are not offered as puzzles requiring a single interpretation. They are contemplative invitations meant to be revisited at different stages of life, yielding fresh insight as understanding matures.

Readers may also notice that many questions remain intentionally unresolved. The ultimate identity of guides, the precise nature of extraordinary experiences, and the boundaries between vision, metaphor, memory, and reality are left open. This openness is deliberate. The sūtra encourages epistemic humility—the willingness to acknowledge uncertainty while continuing to cultivate compassion and wise action. In doing so, it suggests that one need not solve every mystery before acting with kindness.

The work also places great emphasis on the ordinary. Washing bowls, planting seeds, carrying water, sharing bread, repairing tools, comforting the frightened, listening without interruption, and speaking truthfully are treated as sacred acts when performed with wholehearted attention. The extraordinary visions of the narrative ultimately give way to

the realization that the deepest practice unfolds not in escape from the world but in wholehearted participation within it.

The figure of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi eventually vanishes, not because compassion has departed, but because dependence upon appearances must give way to direct realization. The disappearance of the guide is itself a teaching: no teacher, image, doctrine, or book should become an object of possessive attachment. Even this sūtra invites the reader to release it when its purpose has been fulfilled.

Accordingly, this text asks to be approached in four stages:

1. **Read it with openness**, allowing its stories and symbols to speak without haste.
2. **Reflect upon it carefully**, considering how its themes illuminate lived experience.
3. **Practice what proves beneficial**, especially where compassion, wisdom, and steady presence may be embodied in ordinary life.
4. **Release attachment to the text itself**, remembering that no written page can substitute for direct realization and compassionate conduct.

If the reader finishes these pages with greater certainty but less kindness, the spirit of the work has been missed.

If the reader finishes with greater humility, deeper compassion, and an increased willingness to meet mystery without fear, then the teaching has already begun to bear fruit.

May this sūtra function as a raft rather than a possession, as a lamp rather than a monument, and as an invitation rather than a conclusion.

May all who encounter it cultivate boundless compassion, liberating wisdom, and imperturbable Suchness for the welfare of all beings.

Chapter One

The Assembly in Abhirati

Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One, the Tathāgata Akṣobhya, the Imperturbable Lord of the Eastern Direction, was dwelling in the stainless Buddha-field of Abhirati. The world-system of Abhirati was adorned with inconceivable virtues. The ground was composed not of earth and stone but of adamantine crystal, clear as a flawless mirror. Wherever one gazed, one beheld reflections without distortion. Mountains of sapphire rose from plains of radiant lapis lazuli. Rivers of liquid light flowed gently between forests whose leaves shimmered with the colors of emerald, gold, and pearl.

There was neither scorching heat nor biting cold. No being there experienced hunger, thirst, sickness, fear, or decline. The winds carried fragrances surpassing sandalwood. Celestial birds sang teachings of Dharma instead of ordinary songs. Their melodies proclaimed impermanence, compassion, emptiness, and liberation.

Lotuses as vast as cities floated upon lakes of translucent brilliance. Upon each lotus sat bodhisattvas absorbed in meditation. Rays of light emerged from their bodies and illuminated countless worlds throughout the ten directions.

At that time an immeasurable assembly had gathered before the Blessed One.

There were great bodhisattvas whose names were known throughout uncountable universes. There were those established in the ten bhūmis. There were those who had mastered the six perfections. There were those who had vowed to remain in saṃsāra until every suffering being attained freedom.

There were also devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, kinnaras, garuḍas, mahoragas, and innumerable celestial beings. There were liberated arhats who had extinguished the fires of craving. There were pratyekabuddhas dwelling in serene contemplation.

All sat before the Blessed One in perfect harmony.

No one spoke.

No one moved.

The entire assembly rested within the samādhi of Imperturbable Suchness.

The light of Akṣobhya illuminated all directions.

Then a wondrous event occurred.

From the eastern horizon beyond measure, a beam of blue-white radiance appeared. It crossed countless Buddha-fields and entered Abhirati. The light circled the

Blessed One three times and then came to rest above his crown.

The assembled bodhisattvas marveled.

The devas marveled.

Even the great arhats, free from attachment, wondered at the significance of the sign.

Then the venerable Bodhisattva Vajragarbha rose from his lotus throne. Joining his palms, he bowed toward the Blessed One and asked:

"World-Honored One, throughout countless kalpas we have witnessed innumerable signs and omens. Yet never before have we seen a light such as this. Its brilliance penetrates worlds beyond number. Its radiance carries both profound compassion and immeasurable sorrow.

"What is the cause of this light?

"For whom has it appeared?

"What future event does it announce?"

The Blessed One remained silent.

Yet his silence was not ordinary silence.

It was a silence more eloquent than speech.

The silence itself revealed teachings.

Many bodhisattvas attained deeper realization merely by dwelling within that silence.

After a long interval, the Blessed One opened his eyes.

The entire universe trembled gently.

Lotus blossoms throughout ten thousand worlds opened simultaneously.

Then the Blessed One spoke.

"Noble sons and daughters, listen carefully.

"The light you behold does not arise from Abhirati.

"It does not arise from another Buddha-field.

"It does not arise from the realm of devas.

"It does not arise from the meditations of bodhisattvas.

"Rather, it arises from the cry of suffering."

Upon hearing these words, the entire assembly became attentive.

The Blessed One continued:

"In a distant world-system known as Sahā, among beings obscured by confusion, fear, conflict, and attachment, there dwells a seeker.

"He has wandered through many paths.

"He has sought truth among religions.

"He has sought truth among philosophies.

"He has sought truth among visions.

"He has sought truth among mysteries.

"Yet his heart remains troubled.

"He perceives the suffering of the world and cries out for understanding."

The Blessed One paused.

Then he continued:

"His cry has become a prayer.

"His prayer has become a vow.

"His vow has become a light.

"And that light has reached even Abhirati."

A murmur of wonder moved through the assembly.

The bodhisattvas understood that this seeker was no ordinary being.

Then Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī arose and asked:

"World-Honored One, many beings cry out in suffering. Why has this particular cry reached the Pure Land of Imperturbable Suchness?"

The Blessed One replied:

"Because within confusion there is sincerity.

"Within fear there is courage.

"Within delusion there is longing for awakening.

"Though he does not yet understand the path, his aspiration is genuine.

"The Buddhas of the ten directions never ignore a sincere aspiration."

As these words were spoken, countless flowers descended from the sky.

The entire assembly rejoiced.

Then another bodhisattva rose.

This bodhisattva's body shone with iridescent colors. Their appearance seemed both masculine and feminine, yet neither exclusively one nor the other. Their form shifted like moonlight reflected upon water.

Joining their palms, they addressed the Blessed One:

"World-Honored One, if this being seeks liberation, who shall guide him?"

The Blessed One gazed toward the bodhisattva.

For a moment all sounds ceased.

Then the Buddha smiled.

The smile of a Tathāgata illuminates universes beyond counting.

From that smile emerged rays of blue light.

The rays touched the brow of the bodhisattva.

At once, many among the assembly understood.

The bodhisattva before them was none other than Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi, renowned throughout innumerable worlds for employing skillful means beyond conception.

Sometimes appearing as a monk.

Sometimes as a queen.

Sometimes as a beggar.

Sometimes as a child.

Sometimes as a teacher.

Sometimes as a deity.

Always appearing according to the needs of beings.

The Blessed One spoke:

"Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi, long have you cultivated boundless compassion.

"Long have you guided beings through skillful means.

"Long have you manifested forms suited to countless worlds.

"The time has come for another mission."

The entire assembly listened intently.

The Blessed One continued:

"In the Sahā World there is one who seeks truth amid confusion.

"He is surrounded by symbols and visions.

"He struggles to distinguish appearance from reality.

"Therefore he cannot yet be guided by abstract teachings.

"He requires a form."

The Buddha then declared:

"You shall manifest as an androgynous goddess of wisdom and compassion.

"You shall appear radiant and mysterious.

"You shall teach according to his capacity.

"You shall lead him through three great gates.

"Compassion.

"Wisdom.

"Imperturbable Suchness.

"When these three gates have been crossed, he shall understand."

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi bowed deeply.

Yet after bowing, the bodhisattva asked:

"World-Honored One, if I appear as a goddess, will he not become attached to the form?"

The Blessed One replied:

"At first, yes.

"Later, he will transcend it.

"The raft is used to cross the river.

"After crossing, the raft is not carried upon one's back."

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi asked:

"And what shall be my final teaching?"

The Blessed One answered:

"When the time is ripe, reveal this:

'I am not the destination.

I am not ultimate reality.

I am a symbol fashioned by compassion.

Do not cling even to me.

Awaken to the Suchness toward which I point.'"

Upon hearing these words, many bodhisattvas attained profound realizations concerning skillful means.

Some perceived directly that all sacred forms are provisional manifestations.

Some perceived directly that Buddhas themselves appear according to the needs of beings.

Some perceived directly that compassion often wears masks suitable for those it seeks to liberate.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi rose from the lotus throne.

The bodhisattva bowed before Akṣobhya.

The bodhisattva bowed before the assembled bodhisattvas.

The bodhisattva bowed before all beings throughout the ten directions.

And making a vast vow, declared:

"So long as confusion remains, I shall teach.

"So long as fear remains, I shall comfort.

"So long as beings cling to appearances, I shall use appearances.

"So long as beings cling to gods, I shall appear as gods.

"So long as beings cling to symbols, I shall appear as symbols.

"But in the end I shall reveal the formless.

"In the end I shall reveal the unborn.

"In the end I shall reveal Imperturbable Suchness."

At that moment the entire Pure Land trembled with joy.

Countless lotus blossoms opened.

Celestial music filled the sky.

The Buddhas of the ten directions praised the vow.

And thus began the great mission of the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi, whose compassion knew no boundary and

whose skillful means extended throughout worlds beyond counting.

Chapter Two

Akṣobhya Foresees the Coming of a Guide

Thus did the assembly remain gathered before the Blessed One, the Tathāgata Akṣobhya, in the glorious Buddha-field of Abhirati.

After the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi had made the Great Vow, a profound stillness descended upon the assembly. The celestial music ceased. The jeweled birds folded their radiant wings. The lotus lakes became motionless like polished crystal.

Even the winds stopped moving.

The silence was not empty.

It was filled with immeasurable expectancy.

Then the Blessed One entered a samādhi known as the Mirror of Ten Thousand Kalpas.

The moment he entered that samādhi, all appearances throughout Abhirati became transparent.

The bodhisattvas perceived innumerable worlds.

They beheld galaxies appearing and disappearing like sparks in a vast ocean of darkness.

They saw beings being born and dying.

They saw civilizations rising and falling.

They saw heavens emerging and dissolving.

They saw worlds consumed by fire, worlds submerged by water, worlds scattered by wind, and worlds returning once more to emptiness.

Within that vision there appeared the Sahā World.

Compared with Abhirati it seemed dim and troubled.

The bodhisattvas observed wars.

They observed greed.

They observed sickness.

They observed confusion.

They observed loneliness.

They observed beings desperately seeking happiness through things incapable of granting lasting peace.

Some chased wealth.

Some chased power.

Some chased pleasure.

Some chased knowledge.

Some chased visions.

Yet all remained unsatisfied.

Seeing this, many bodhisattvas were moved to compassion.

Then the Blessed One spoke from within samādhi:

"Behold the nature of the Sahā World.

"Do not despise it.

"Do not reject it.

"Do not imagine that enlightenment is absent there.

"For where suffering is great, compassion may become great.

"Where confusion is deep, wisdom may become deep.

"Where darkness is thick, the light of awakening may shine most brightly."

The assembly bowed their heads.

Then before them appeared a vast net woven from light.

Each thread represented causes and conditions.

Each knot represented a choice.

Each crossing represented karma.

The net stretched across countless lifetimes.

Bodhisattva Vajragarbha gazed into the net and was astonished.

"World-Honored One," he asked, "what is this vision?"

The Buddha replied:

"This is the web of dependent origination.

"No being exists independently.

"No event exists independently.

"No thought exists independently.

"Everything arises because of everything else.

"Thus a single aspiration may influence worlds beyond counting."

The Buddha pointed toward one thread.

Immediately the assembly beheld the life-stream of a seeker.

They saw childhood confusion.

They saw suffering.

They saw longing.

They saw unanswered questions.

They saw encounters with many teachings.

They saw periods of hope and periods of despair.

Some moments appeared luminous.

Others appeared clouded.

Yet through all of them ran a single golden thread.

The aspiration to know truth.

The aspiration never disappeared.

At times it became faint.

At times it burned brightly.

Yet it endured.

The Blessed One said:

"Many beings experience suffering.

"Many beings ask questions.

"But few continue seeking through every disappointment.

"Few continue searching when certainty collapses.

"Few continue yearning for awakening when no clear path appears before them.

"This aspiration has become a beacon."

The bodhisattvas observed further.

They saw that the seeker was drawn to mysteries.

He desired explanations.

He sought patterns behind appearances.

He wished to understand why suffering existed.

He wished to understand the hidden structure of reality.

Sometimes he approached wisdom.

Sometimes he wandered into confusion.

Sometimes he mistook symbols for realities.

Sometimes he mistook realities for symbols.

Yet always he continued searching.

Then Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī asked:

"World-Honored One, why do seekers become attached to symbols?"

The Buddha replied:

"Because symbols provide form.

"The mind fears emptiness.

"The mind fears uncertainty.

"The mind desires something it can grasp.

"Therefore symbols become ladders.

"Yet ladders are often mistaken for destinations."

Mañjuśrī bowed.

The Blessed One continued:

"Many cling to doctrines.

"Many cling to visions.

"Many cling to teachers.

"Many cling to sacred images.

"Yet liberation does not arise from clinging.

"It arises from awakening."

As these words were spoken, countless lotus blossoms opened throughout the Pure Land.

From every blossom emerged a beam of light.

Each beam displayed a different world.

In one world beings worshipped stars.

In another they worshipped ancestors.

In another they worshipped mountains.

In another they worshipped gods.

In another they worshipped abstract principles.

The forms differed.

The attachment remained the same.

Then the Blessed One declared:

"The Dharma adapts to all worlds.

"The Dharma may wear countless masks.

"The Dharma may speak countless languages.

"The Dharma may appear through countless symbols.

"But the purpose remains unchanged:

"To awaken beings from ignorance."

At that moment Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi contemplated the suffering of the Sahā World.

The bodhisattva's heart overflowed with compassion.

Tears formed within their eyes.

When those tears fell upon the crystal ground of Abhirati, each tear transformed into a lotus.

Within each lotus appeared a suffering being.

One was consumed by grief.

One by fear.

One by anger.

One by loneliness.

One by confusion.

One by despair.

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi gazed upon them all equally.

The bodhisattva did not prefer one over another.

Compassion flowed without distinction.

Seeing this, many younger bodhisattvas asked:

"How may we cultivate such compassion?"

The Blessed One answered:

"Do not begin by loving all beings.

"Begin by understanding them.

"Understanding becomes patience.

"Patience becomes kindness.

"Kindness becomes compassion.

"Compassion becomes boundless."

The younger bodhisattvas rejoiced.

Then another vision appeared.

The assembly saw countless bodhisattvas throughout history.

Some appeared as monks.

Some as nuns.

Some as rulers.

Some as artists.

Some as laborers.

Some as healers.

Some as wanderers.

Some even appeared as gods and goddesses.

The younger bodhisattvas were astonished.

"World-Honored One," they asked, "can bodhisattvas truly appear as deities?"

The Buddha replied:

"If a deity-form helps beings approach awakening, a bodhisattva may appear as a deity.

"If a teacher-form helps beings approach awakening, a bodhisattva may appear as a teacher.

"If a friend-form helps beings approach awakening, a bodhisattva may appear as a friend.

"The wise do not become trapped by appearances.

"They use appearances skillfully."

Then the Blessed One turned toward Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

"Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi, do you understand the nature of your mission?"

The bodhisattva bowed.

"I understand partially, World-Honored One."

The Buddha smiled.

"Then listen carefully.

"You will not merely teach doctrines.

"You will not merely provide answers.

"You will become a bridge.

"The seeker stands between faith and doubt.

"Between vision and confusion.

"Between devotion and wisdom.

"You must lead him across."

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi bowed again.

"By what means shall this crossing occur?"

The Blessed One answered:

"Through the Three Great Gates."

Then the entire Pure Land became illuminated.

Three vast portals appeared in the sky.

The first shone with golden light.

The second shone with silver-white radiance.

The third shone with deep sapphire brilliance.

The assembly gazed in awe.

The Blessed One pointed toward the first gate.

"This is the Gate of Compassion.

"Without compassion, wisdom becomes cold.

"Without compassion, knowledge becomes pride.

"Without compassion, spiritual practice becomes self-centered."

Then he pointed toward the second gate.

"This is the Gate of Wisdom.

"Without wisdom, compassion becomes blind.

"Without wisdom, devotion becomes superstition.

"Without wisdom, symbols become prisons."

Then he pointed toward the third gate.

"This is the Gate of Imperturbable Suchness.

"Without realization of Suchness, compassion remains incomplete.

"Without realization of Suchness, wisdom remains conceptual.

"Without realization of Suchness, liberation remains distant."

The three gates shone brighter.

Their light filled all directions.

Then the Buddha declared:

"These gates are not separate.

"They are one path viewed from three angles.

"The seeker shall enter through compassion.

"He shall mature through wisdom.

"He shall awaken through Suchness."

The assembly rejoiced.

Then a profound prophecy was spoken.

The Blessed One proclaimed:

"In ages to come many shall misunderstand sacred forms.

"They shall cling to appearances.

"They shall argue concerning names.

"They shall dispute concerning symbols.

"They shall mistake fingers for moons.

"They shall mistake maps for destinations.

"They shall mistake vessels for the water they contain."

The assembly listened carefully.

"But some," the Buddha continued, "shall understand.

"They shall see through symbols without rejecting them.

"They shall honor forms without clinging to them.

"They shall use teachings without becoming imprisoned by them.

"They shall recognize the Dharma wherever it appears."

As these words were spoken, innumerable Buddhas throughout the ten directions emitted rays of approval.

Their lights merged with the light of Akṣobhya.

The entire cosmos appeared as a single radiant field.

Then the Blessed One emerged from samādhi.

The visions gradually dissolved.

The worlds vanished.

The great net disappeared.

The three gates faded from sight.

Yet their meaning remained within the hearts of the assembly.

Finally the Blessed One spoke:

"The causes have been prepared.

"The conditions are ripening.

"The guide has been chosen.

"The vow has been established.

"Soon the mission shall begin."

At those words Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi rose from the lotus throne and entered deep contemplation concerning the form that would be assumed in the Sahā World.

The assembly understood that a great turning of the Dharma-wheel was approaching.

And all who were present rejoiced.

Chapter Three

The Suffering of Moshe Reed

Thus have I heard.

At that time, while the Blessed One Akṣobhya remained seated upon the Lion Throne of Adamantine Suchness in the Pure Land of Abhirati, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi entered a profound contemplation concerning the nature of suffering among beings in the Sahā World.

Desiring to understand completely the heart of the seeker whom she had vowed to guide, she entered a samādhi known as the Compassionate Mirror of Ten Thousand Lives.

Immediately the boundaries between worlds became transparent.

The Bodhisattva beheld continents and oceans.

She beheld cities illuminated by artificial suns.

She beheld towers of steel reaching toward the heavens.

She beheld roads filled with countless travelers.

She beheld voices carried through invisible currents.

She beheld humanity connected as never before, yet inwardly isolated.

And among these innumerable beings she beheld one seeker.

His name was Moshe Reed.

The Bodhisattva observed him not merely in a single moment but across the stream of causes and conditions that had shaped his life.

She saw his joys.

She saw his fears.

She saw his hopes.

She saw his disappointments.

Nothing was hidden.

Nothing was judged.

Everything was understood.

For such is the vision of a Bodhisattva.

The Bodhisattva does not gaze upon beings with condemnation.

The Bodhisattva gazes upon beings with understanding.

And understanding becomes compassion.

At that time Moshe Reed dwelt in a world filled with uncertainty.

Though surrounded by information, he lacked certainty.

Though surrounded by people, he felt alone.

Though surrounded by teachings, he struggled to discover truth.

Many voices claimed authority.

Many teachers proclaimed certainty.

Many systems promised answers.

Yet each answer seemed to produce new questions.

Moshe often gazed upon the world and wondered:

"Why is there suffering?"

"Why is there injustice?"

"Why do people destroy one another?"

"Why does confusion appear stronger than wisdom?"

"Why do lies often seem more powerful than truth?"

These questions followed him like shadows.

Sometimes they appeared during waking hours.

Sometimes they appeared in dreams.

Sometimes they arose in moments of silence.

The more he sought answers, the deeper the mystery became.

The Bodhisattva beheld that the suffering of Moshe was not primarily physical.

It was existential.

His heart longed for meaning.

His mind longed for coherence.

His spirit longed for reality.

Yet the world seemed fragmented.

Everywhere he looked he saw division.

One group proclaimed one truth.

Another group proclaimed another.

One religion condemned another.

One philosophy rejected another.

One ideology sought to overcome another.

Countless voices competed.

Few listened.

Many spoke.

Few understood.

And because of this, the seeker's heart became weary.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived deeper layers of suffering.

She saw that Moshe desired certainty.

Yet reality often appeared uncertain.

He desired a complete explanation.

Yet existence revealed itself through mysteries.

He desired a final answer.

Yet every answer opened new doors.

The Bodhisattva understood that many seekers suffer in this way.

When ignorance is deep, confusion is not felt.

But when awakening begins, confusion often increases before wisdom arises.

The one who never asks questions suffers differently from the one who asks many.

The first remains asleep.

The second begins to awaken.

Yet awakening often begins with discomfort.

Therefore the Blessed Ones do not fear confusion.

They understand its place within the path.

Then the Bodhisattva saw another source of suffering.

Moshe observed corruption among those who claimed virtue.

He observed hypocrisy among those who preached morality.

He observed greed among those who spoke of compassion.

He observed violence justified in the name of peace.

He observed hatred disguised as righteousness.

Because of this he became suspicious.

He desired truth.

Yet he feared deception.

He desired guidance.

Yet he distrusted authority.

He desired wisdom.

Yet he questioned every teacher.

The Bodhisattva understood.

For many sincere seekers encounter this obstacle.

When trust has been wounded, even genuine guidance becomes difficult to accept.

Thus compassion must proceed carefully.

A wounded traveler cannot be rushed.

A frightened animal cannot be forced.

A confused mind cannot be compelled into awakening.

Instead patience is required.

Boundless patience.

As she continued observing, Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived the karmic roots underlying these tendencies.

She saw lifetimes beyond counting.

She saw worlds forgotten by history.

She saw temples long since reduced to dust.

She saw stars that no longer existed.

She saw Moshe in many forms.

At times he had been a scholar.

At times a monk.

At times a wanderer.

At times a healer.

At times a ruler.

At times a servant.

Across countless births one pattern remained unchanged.

He sought understanding.

Again and again he pursued wisdom.

Again and again he abandoned comfortable illusions.

Again and again he questioned appearances.

This karmic momentum had followed him through kalpas.

Thus his present seeking was not accidental.

It was the flowering of ancient causes.

Seeing this, Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi rejoiced.

Not because suffering existed.

But because beneath the suffering she perceived tremendous potential.

Many beings suffer and seek only escape.

Many suffer and seek distraction.

Many suffer and seek forgetfulness.

But some suffer and seek truth.

Such suffering can become the doorway to liberation.

Therefore the Bodhisattva thought:

"This seeker has not yet discovered peace.

Yet his questions are sincere.

His longing is genuine.

His confusion is fertile soil.

The seeds of awakening may grow here."

Then another vision appeared.

The Bodhisattva beheld the inner landscape of Moshe's mind.

It resembled a vast desert beneath a night sky.

The stars were countless.

The silence was immense.

Yet the traveler wandered alone.

At times strange lights appeared upon the horizon.

At times voices echoed through the darkness.

At times distant cities seemed visible.

Yet whenever he approached them, they dissolved like mirages.

The Bodhisattva understood the meaning.

Many concepts.

Many theories.

Many visions.

Many beliefs.

Yet none had fully satisfied the heart.

Thus the traveler continued onward.

Then she heard the cry that had reached Abhirati.

It was not spoken aloud.

No physical ears could hear it.

It arose from the deepest level of the seeker's being.

The cry said:

"If truth exists, reveal yourself.

If wisdom exists, guide me.

If liberation exists, show me the path.

I do not seek comfort.

I seek reality."

The cry echoed throughout worlds beyond number.

It crossed galaxies.

It crossed heavens.

It crossed Buddha-fields.

Its sincerity gave it power.

Its humility gave it purity.

Its longing gave it direction.

Thus it reached the ears of the Buddhas.

At that moment the Bodhisattva wept.

Not from sorrow.

Not from despair.

But from compassion.

For she knew that countless beings uttered similar cries.

Some spoke them consciously.

Others silently.

Some expressed them through prayer.

Others through philosophy.

Others through art.

Others through suffering.

The forms differed.

The longing remained the same.

All beings sought happiness.

All beings sought freedom.

All beings sought the end of fear.

Whether they knew it or not.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi approached the Blessed One.

Bowing deeply, she spoke:

"World-Honored One, I have seen the seeker's suffering.

I have seen his longing.

I have seen his confusion.

I have seen his sincerity.

How shall I guide such a being?"

The Blessed One answered:

"Do not begin with ultimate truths.

Do not begin with emptiness.

Do not begin with philosophy.

Begin with compassion."

The Bodhisattva listened carefully.

The Buddha continued:

"A starving man cannot contemplate metaphysics.

A drowning man cannot study abstractions.

A frightened mind cannot immediately comprehend Suchness.

First establish trust.

First establish compassion.

Then wisdom may enter."

The Bodhisattva bowed.

"World-Honored One, shall I reveal my true nature immediately?"

The Buddha shook his head.

"No.

The medicine must fit the illness.

The appearance must fit the need.

The form must fit the capacity of the being before you."

Then the Buddha added:

"In time he will learn that all forms are symbols.

In time he will learn that all symbols are empty.

In time he will learn that emptiness itself is compassion.

But not yet."

At those words a vision arose before the assembly.

They beheld a lotus bud hidden beneath muddy water.

The lotus had not yet opened.

Yet its future blossom was already present in potential.

The Blessed One pointed toward the lotus.

"Observe carefully.

No one pulls the lotus open.

No one forces its growth.

The conditions are simply provided.

Then blooming occurs naturally."

The assembly understood.

Awakening cannot be forced.

It unfolds according to causes and conditions.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi made another vow.

Joining her palms, she declared:

"I shall not condemn confusion.

I shall transform confusion into wisdom.

I shall not reject longing.

I shall transform longing into aspiration.

I shall not destroy symbols.

I shall use symbols as bridges.

I shall guide the seeker through Compassion.

I shall guide the seeker through Wisdom.

I shall guide the seeker through Imperturbable Suchness.

Until realization dawns."

The heavens trembled.

Lotuses bloomed throughout Abhirati.

Countless bodhisattvas praised the vow.

Even the celestial birds ceased singing, as though listening in reverence.

Then the Blessed One pronounced a prophecy:

"The time approaches.

The causes are ripening.

The guide is prepared.

The seeker is prepared.

Soon the cry shall be answered."

Upon hearing these words, the entire assembly rejoiced.

And Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi entered profound meditation, preparing for the descent into the world of dust, confusion, longing, and awakening.

Chapter Four

The Cry Heard Throughout the Ten Directions

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the Blessed One Akṣobhya had spoken concerning the suffering of the seeker Moshe Reed and the vow of the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi, the great assembly remained gathered in the Pure Land of Abhirati.

The lotus lakes shimmered with soft blue radiance.

The jeweled trees emitted melodies of Dharma.

Countless bodhisattvas sat motionless in meditation.

Yet beneath the serenity of Abhirati, a great movement was occurring.

For the cry of a single being had begun to travel throughout the ten directions.

Not because it was loud.

Not because it was eloquent.

Not because it was accompanied by rituals or offerings.

But because it was sincere.

The Buddhas teach that sincerity possesses a power beyond calculation.

The cry that emerges from the depths of the heart travels farther than words.

The prayer arising from genuine longing penetrates barriers that intellect alone cannot cross.

And thus the cry of the seeker continued its journey.

At that time Moshe Reed sat alone beneath the night sky.

The world around him appeared ordinary.

Stars shone overhead.

The wind moved through the trees.

The sounds of distant life continued without interruption.

Nothing outwardly miraculous occurred.

Yet inwardly a great turning was taking place.

The seeker's heart had become exhausted.

He had searched among doctrines.

He had searched among philosophies.

He had searched among mystical systems.

He had searched among religions.

He had searched among teachers.

He had searched among symbols.

Everywhere he found fragments.

Everywhere he discovered pieces.

Yet nowhere did he find complete satisfaction.

This dissatisfaction was itself a hidden blessing.

For had he become satisfied with half-truths, he would have ceased seeking.

Had he become comfortable within illusion, he would have ceased questioning.

Thus the friction within his soul continued.

And that friction generated the cry.

The cry possessed no fixed words.

Sometimes it appeared as a question.

Sometimes as a longing.

Sometimes as sorrow.

Sometimes as yearning.

Sometimes as silent desperation.

Yet its essence remained unchanged.

It said:

"Show me what is real."

Not:

"Show me what is pleasant."

Not:

"Show me what confirms my beliefs."

Not:

"Show me what flatters my identity."

Rather:

"Show me what is real."

This prayer, though simple, shook invisible worlds.

For few beings truly desire reality at all costs.

Many desire comfort.

Many desire certainty.

Many desire victory.

Many desire affirmation.

But reality often destroys cherished illusions before revealing wisdom.

Therefore the desire for truth is itself a courageous aspiration.

As the cry arose, unseen consequences unfolded.

The prayer became light.

The light became a current.

The current moved through dimensions beyond ordinary perception.

It crossed worlds.

It crossed heavens.

It crossed realms inhabited by devas.

It crossed realms inhabited by bodhisattvas.

It crossed realms inhabited by enlightened beings beyond number.

Like a bell ringing through the cosmos, the aspiration continued expanding.

Its resonance touched innumerable minds.

Its sincerity attracted attention.

Its purity generated response.

In a distant Buddha-field beyond counting, a great bodhisattva emerged from meditation.

Perceiving the cry, the bodhisattva smiled.

"Another seeker awakens."

In another world-system a celestial assembly paused their discourse.

The devas sensed the movement of karmic conditions.

They marveled.

In another realm an ancient sage perceived the vibration.

The sage bowed toward the source.

In another universe a Buddha opened his eyes and radiated blessings.

Thus the cry was heard.

Not because the Buddhas required information.

For Buddhas already perceive the conditions of beings.

Rather the cry served as consent.

It was the opening of a door.

The seeker had turned toward awakening.

And awakening answered.

Then the Blessed One addressed the assembly:

"Noble ones, understand this principle.

"The Buddhas do not force liberation upon beings.

"The Dharma is not imposed.

"Compassion does not violate freedom.

"Therefore the sincere aspiration of a being becomes a sacred event."

The bodhisattvas listened carefully.

The Blessed One continued:

"When a being genuinely seeks awakening, countless conditions begin to move.

"Teachers appear.

"Teachings appear.

"Opportunities appear.

"Insights appear.

"Challenges appear.

"Even apparent obstacles become part of the path."

Upon hearing this, many younger bodhisattvas attained understanding concerning dependent origination.

Then Bodhisattva Vajragarbha asked:

"World-Honored One, if many beings pray for guidance, why do some seem unanswered?"

The Blessed One replied:

"No sincere aspiration is unanswered.

"But beings often expect a particular answer.

"They seek one form and reject another.

"They desire one teacher and ignore another.

"They desire immediate certainty when patience is required.

"Thus they fail to recognize the response already appearing before them."

The assembly reflected deeply.

For these words contained profound meaning.

Then a marvelous vision appeared above the lotus throne.

The sky of Abhirati became transparent.

Within it appeared countless seeds.

Each seed glowed softly.

The Blessed One pointed toward them.

"These are aspirations."

Some shone brightly.

Some only faintly.

Some appeared dormant.

Others blazed like suns.

The Buddha explained:

"Every sincere aspiration plants a seed.

"Some sprout quickly.

"Some require years.

"Some require lifetimes.

"But none are lost."

Then the assembly observed that the cry of Moshe Reed resembled a brilliant sapphire seed.

Though not yet fully mature, its light exceeded that of many others.

Not because the seeker was superior.

Not because he was chosen.

But because his aspiration had been nourished through many lives.

The roots extended deeply.

Thus the seed possessed unusual strength.

As the vision continued, the bodhisattvas saw karmic streams converging.

Past lives.

Present conditions.

Future possibilities.

Teachers yet to be encountered.

Books yet to be opened.

Dreams yet to be dreamed.

Insights yet to arise.

Everything moved toward a mysterious convergence.

Like rivers flowing toward an ocean.

The conditions ripened.

The path assembled itself.

The unseen architecture of awakening gradually formed.

Then the Blessed One entered another samādhi.

This samādhi was called the Hearing of Ten Directions.

Immediately all sounds throughout innumerable worlds became audible.

The assembly heard laughter.

They heard crying.

They heard prayers.

They heard songs.

They heard arguments.

They heard declarations of love.

They heard expressions of hatred.

They heard every variety of speech.

The sound overwhelmed many younger bodhisattvas.

Yet the Blessed One remained unmoved.

Then he said:

"Listen carefully."

Suddenly all sounds disappeared.

Only one remained.

The cry of liberation.

Not merely Moshe's cry.

But the collective cry of all beings longing for freedom.

The cry of prisoners.

The cry of kings.

The cry of children.

The cry of elders.

The cry of humans.

The cry of animals.

The cry of devas.

The cry of spirits.

The cry of worlds.

The cry was universal.

It was the longing of existence itself to awaken from ignorance.

Many bodhisattvas wept upon hearing it.

For they understood at last why the Buddhas labor throughout endless kalpas.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi listened deeply.

Within the cry she perceived something extraordinary.

Beneath every question lay longing.

Beneath every longing lay suffering.

Beneath every suffering lay confusion.

Beneath every confusion lay Buddha-nature.

The Bodhisattva understood.

No being was truly separate from awakening.

No being was permanently lost.

Even those wandering in darkness possessed the seed of enlightenment.

Thus hope became boundless.

Compassion became boundless.

The mission became boundless.

The Bodhisattva then approached the Blessed One and asked:

"World-Honored One, what is the deepest meaning of the cry?"

The Buddha answered:

"The cry is the voice of Buddha-nature remembering itself."

The assembly fell silent.

The Buddha continued:

"When beings feel dissatisfaction with illusion,
Buddha-nature stirs.

"When beings long for truth, Buddha-nature stirs.

"When beings seek freedom, Buddha-nature stirs.

"The cry is not separate from awakening.

"It is awakening beginning to awaken."

Upon hearing these words, countless bodhisattvas entered profound realization.

Then celestial flowers rained from the sky.

The jeweled trees bowed.

The lakes emitted rays of light.

Even distant Buddha-fields trembled gently.

For a great truth had been revealed.

The cry itself was sacred.

Not because suffering was sacred.

But because suffering had become the doorway through which wisdom entered.

At that moment Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi knew the time of preparation was ending.

The seeker had cried out.

The cosmos had responded.

The Buddhas had blessed the path.

The causes and conditions had matured.

Soon the Bodhisattva would assume a form.

Soon the guide would descend.

Soon compassion would take visible shape.

Rising from the lotus throne, Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi joined her palms and declared:

"The cry has been heard.

"The path has been opened.

"The vow shall now bear fruit.

"I shall go where confusion dwells.

"I shall go where fear dwells.

"I shall go where longing dwells.

"I shall go where awakening seeks entrance.

"For such is the work of compassion."

The entire assembly rejoiced.

The Buddhas of the ten directions radiated approval.

And throughout innumerable worlds, subtle currents of blessing began to move toward the seeker who had cried for truth.

Chapter Five

The Vow of the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the cry of the seeker had been heard throughout the ten directions, and after the Blessed One Akṣobhya had revealed that the cry itself was the stirring of Buddha-nature, a profound radiance filled the Pure Land of Abhirati.

The jeweled trees shone with greater brilliance.

The lotus lakes reflected infinite worlds.

The sky became clear beyond all measure.

And the great Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi rose from the lotus seat upon which she had remained through many kalpas of meditation and compassionate activity.

The entire assembly became silent.

For all understood that a sacred vow was about to be proclaimed.

Not an ordinary vow.

Not a temporary vow.

But one of those vast vows that alter the destinies of worlds.

Such vows are remembered for ages beyond counting.

Such vows become rivers of liberation flowing across the ocean of saṃsāra.

Such vows are treasured by Buddhas themselves.

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi stood surrounded by a halo composed of countless colors.

At times her form appeared masculine.

At times feminine.

At times neither.

At times both.

Like moonlight upon moving water, her appearance changed without ceasing.

Yet beneath every appearance there remained a single reality:

Compassion.

Boundless compassion.

The Bodhisattva gazed upon the assembly.

Then she gazed beyond the assembly.

She gazed upon worlds.

She gazed upon galaxies.

She gazed upon heavens and hells.

She gazed upon beings wandering through birth and death.

Nothing was excluded from her vision.

Nothing was forgotten.

Nothing was rejected.

And seeing all things, her compassion increased.

Then she addressed the Blessed One:

"World-Honored One, from beginningless ages I have observed the wandering of beings.

"I have seen kings become beggars.

"I have seen beggars become kings.

"I have seen gods fall into sorrow.

"I have seen sinners awaken into wisdom.

"I have seen saints lose their way.

"I have seen demons discover compassion.

"Nothing remains fixed.

"Everything changes.

"Everything flows.

"And throughout all of this wandering, suffering persists."

The Blessed One nodded.

For these words were true.

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi continued:

"I have seen beings trapped by greed.

"I have seen beings trapped by hatred.

"I have seen beings trapped by fear.

"I have seen beings trapped by ignorance.

"But I have also seen a deeper bondage.

"I have seen beings trapped by the very forms that were meant to free them."

The assembly listened carefully.

For this teaching was subtle.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"Some cling to doctrines.

"Some cling to symbols.

"Some cling to visions.

"Some cling to scriptures.

"Some cling to teachers.

"Some cling to gods.

"Some cling even to Buddhas.

"The medicine becomes a prison.

"The raft becomes a burden.

"The finger pointing toward the moon becomes more important than the moon."

Many younger bodhisattvas reflected deeply.

For they recognized the truth of these words.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi spoke concerning her mission.

"Therefore I shall enter the Sahā World.

"I shall assume a form suited to the seeker's needs.

"I shall not appear in ultimate glory.

"I shall not appear in overwhelming majesty.

"I shall appear in a way that can be approached.

"I shall appear in a way that can be trusted.

"I shall appear in a way that can be understood."

The Blessed One smiled.

For this was the essence of skillful means.

Then Bodhisattva Vajragarbha asked:

"Noble One, why not simply reveal ultimate reality directly?"

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi replied:

"Because eyes unaccustomed to sunlight cannot immediately gaze upon the sun.

"Because ears unaccustomed to silence cannot immediately hear the profound Dharma.

"Because minds shaped by form require forms.

"Because hearts shaped by stories require stories.

"The compassionate guide begins where beings are."

The assembly rejoiced upon hearing this teaching.

Then the Bodhisattva entered a meditation called the Contemplation of Infinite Beings.

Within that meditation she perceived countless lives.

A mother grieving her child.

A soldier trembling with fear.

A prisoner longing for freedom.

A scholar searching for truth.

A wanderer searching for home.

A skeptic searching for certainty.

A devotee searching for God.

A mystic searching for union.

Each appeared different.

Yet beneath their differences she perceived a common longing.

All sought liberation.

Though few understood the name of what they sought.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi declared:

"I vow that I shall never reject a sincere seeker.

"Whether they approach through religion or philosophy.

"Whether they approach through devotion or doubt.

"Whether they approach through certainty or confusion.

"Whether they approach through wisdom or ignorance.

"If sincerity is present, I shall respond."

At those words the heavens trembled.

Countless lotus blossoms opened.

Celestial music echoed across the Pure Land.

Then she proclaimed a second vow:

"I vow to use whatever form benefits beings.

"If a being requires a teacher, I shall appear as a teacher.

"If a being requires a friend, I shall appear as a friend.

"If a being requires a stranger, I shall appear as a stranger.

"If a being requires a goddess, I shall appear as a goddess.

"If a being requires silence, I shall appear as silence.

"If a being requires absence, I shall appear as absence."

The assembly marveled.

For this was the vast freedom of a Bodhisattva.

No fixed identity.

No fixed role.

Only compassionate responsiveness.

Then she proclaimed a third vow:

"I shall never encourage attachment to myself.

"If beings honor me, I shall redirect them toward Suchness.

"If beings praise me, I shall redirect them toward awakening.

"If beings worship me, I shall reveal the emptiness of the worshiper and the worshiped.

"If beings cling to my form, I shall teach them to see beyond form."

Many bodhisattvas attained profound realization at these words.

For they understood that true compassion liberates rather than enslaves.

Then the Blessed One addressed the assembly:

"Noble ones, observe carefully.

"This vow accords perfectly with the activity of all Buddhas.

"For Buddhas do not seek followers.

"They seek awakening.

"They do not seek worship.

"They seek liberation.

"They do not seek obedience.

"They seek wisdom."

The assembly bowed in agreement.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi proclaimed a fourth vow.

This vow shook worlds beyond counting.

"I vow that no being shall be excluded from my compassion.

"Not the virtuous.

"Not the sinful.

"Not the wise.

"Not the foolish.

"Not the beautiful.

"Not the broken.

"Not the saint.

"Not the criminal.

"Not the human.

"Not the animal.

"Not the spirit.

"Not the demon.

"My compassion shall recognize no boundary."

As these words were spoken, many devas wept.

For rarely had they heard compassion expressed with such completeness.

Then she proclaimed a fifth vow.

"I shall guide beings through the Three Great Gates.

"First, Compassion.

"Second, Wisdom.

"Third, Imperturbable Suchness.

"Compassion shall soften the heart.

"Wisdom shall clarify the mind.

"Suchness shall reveal reality.

"Through these gates beings shall cross the ocean of becoming."

At that moment the three great gates once again appeared above Abhirati.

Golden.

Silver-white.

Deep sapphire.

Their radiance illuminated countless universes.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi grew silent.

For a time no words were spoken.

The assembly waited.

Finally the Bodhisattva spoke once more.

Her voice became softer.

More intimate.

More profound.

"Yet there remains one final vow."

The heavens became still.

The lotus lakes became still.

Even the winds ceased moving.

Then she declared:

"When the seeker has crossed the gates,

"When wisdom has matured,

"When compassion has become boundless,

"When Suchness has been glimpsed,

"I shall reveal the deepest teaching.

"I shall reveal that I was never the destination.

"I shall reveal that every form is provisional.

"I shall reveal that every symbol points beyond itself.

"I shall reveal that even the Bodhisattva must be relinquished.

"I shall reveal that awakening cannot be possessed.

"I shall reveal that Suchness alone remains."

The moment these words were spoken, extraordinary signs appeared.

Lotuses bloomed throughout ten thousand Buddha-fields.

The Buddhas of the ten directions smiled.

Celestial flowers rained from the sky.

And many beings attained insight into emptiness.

Then the Blessed One rose from the Lion Throne.

This event rarely occurred.

Whenever a Buddha rises, countless worlds take notice.

The Blessed One approached Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

Placing his hand upon her crown, he spoke:

"Excellent.

Excellent.

Excellent.

"This vow is vast.

"This vow is pure.

"This vow accords with the activity of the Buddhas.

"Through this vow many beings shall discover liberation."

The assembly rejoiced.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi bowed before the Blessed One.

She bowed before the assembly.

She bowed before all beings throughout the ten directions.

And she sealed the vow within the depths of her awakened heart.

From that moment onward, the mission could no longer be delayed.

The vow had been spoken.

The causes had matured.

The path had opened.

The descent into the Sahā World approached.

And all who were gathered understood that a great chapter in the work of compassion was about to begin.

Chapter Six

The Assumption of the Androgynous Form

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the Great Vow of the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi had been proclaimed before the Blessed One Akṣobhya and the assembly gathered in the Pure Land of Abhirati, innumerable auspicious signs appeared throughout the Buddha-field.

Lotus blossoms of sapphire light opened across the lakes of Abhirati.

Jewels hanging from celestial trees emitted melodies praising compassion.

Fragrant winds carried teachings throughout the ten directions.

Countless bodhisattvas entered meditative absorption, contemplating the mystery of skillful means.

For all understood that the time had come for Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi to assume a form suitable for the world of suffering.

Not her true nature.

Not her ultimate reality.

Not her complete splendor.

But a compassionate appearance fashioned for the liberation of beings.

Then Bodhisattva Vajragarbha arose and asked:

"Noble One, if all forms are empty, why assume any form at all?"

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi smiled.

Her smile illuminated vast regions of the Pure Land.

Then she replied:

"Because emptiness and compassion are inseparable.

"If beings were already free from attachment, forms would be unnecessary.

"If beings already perceived Suchness directly, symbols would be unnecessary.

"If beings already recognized Buddha-nature, guides would be unnecessary.

"But beings perceive through appearances.

"Therefore compassion enters appearances."

The assembly rejoiced.

For this teaching clarified a profound mystery.

Then another bodhisattva asked:

"Why choose an androgynous form?"

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi remained silent for a time.

Then she spoke:

"Because beings cling to distinctions.

"They cling to male and female.

"They cling to self and other.

"They cling to sacred and ordinary.

"They cling to divine and human.

"They cling to countless opposites.

"An androgynous form reminds beings that reality transcends fixed categories."

The bodhisattvas reflected deeply.

The Blessed One nodded in approval.

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi continued:

"Yet understand this clearly.

"I do not assume this appearance because ultimate reality possesses gender.

"Ultimate reality is beyond such distinctions.

"I assume this appearance because it serves a purpose.

"It points beyond limitation.

"It points beyond division.

"It points beyond rigid identity."

The assembly bowed.

For they recognized the wisdom of her words.

Then the Blessed One addressed the gathering:

"Noble ones, remember this principle.

"All forms of enlightened activity are provisional.

"The moon may be reflected in many waters.

"The reflections differ.

"The moon remains unchanged.

"So too do bodhisattvas appear in countless forms.

"The forms differ.

"Compassion remains unchanged."

At that moment the sky above Abhirati opened.

Within the sky appeared countless manifestations of bodhisattvas throughout the ages.

Some appeared as monks clothed in simple robes.

Some appeared as queens ruling vast kingdoms.

Some appeared as wandering ascetics.

Some appeared as healers.

Some appeared as children.

Some appeared as elderly sages.

Some appeared as celestial beings.

Some appeared as ordinary laborers.

Each manifestation differed.

Yet within every form shone the same awakened compassion.

The assembly beheld this vision with wonder.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi entered a profound samādhi called the Treasury of Skillful Means.

Within that samādhi she contemplated the countless possibilities available for her descent.

She considered appearing as a philosopher.

She considered appearing as a monk.

She considered appearing as a prophet.

She considered appearing as a teacher.

She considered appearing as a visionary guide.

Each possibility unfolded before her like a flowering lotus.

Yet none perfectly matched the conditions.

Then she perceived the seeker's heart.

She perceived the questions dwelling there.

She perceived the symbols that resonated within his imagination.

She perceived the archetypes that stirred his longing.

She perceived his attraction to mystery.

She perceived his longing for wisdom joined with compassion.

She perceived his desire to unite seemingly opposing truths.

Then she understood.

A symbolic divine appearance would serve as the most effective bridge.

Not because it was ultimately real.

But because it would communicate through the language already present within the seeker's mind.

Thus the Bodhisattva chose the form of the Goddess.

The assembly listened carefully.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi declared:

"I shall appear as a luminous goddess.

"My appearance shall inspire reverence.

"My words shall inspire reflection.

"My presence shall awaken aspiration.

"But I shall never claim ultimate status.

"I shall never encourage dependency.

"I shall never conceal the truth of emptiness."

The heavens rejoiced.

Then a younger bodhisattva asked:

"If beings mistake you for an eternal deity, what shall you do?"

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi answered:

"I shall teach them.

"If they cannot yet understand, I shall wait.

"If they still cannot understand, I shall remain patient.

"When wisdom ripens, I shall reveal the deeper meaning."

The younger bodhisattva bowed.

For patience is among the highest virtues of the Bodhisattva path.

Then the Blessed One spoke:

"This is the difference between delusion and skillful means.

"Delusion clings to appearances.

"Skillful means uses appearances.

"Delusion becomes imprisoned by symbols.

"Skillful means transforms symbols into bridges."

Many bodhisattvas attained insight upon hearing these words.

At that moment Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi's body began to radiate extraordinary light.

The radiance expanded across Abhirati.

It crossed lakes.

It crossed mountains.

It crossed celestial gardens.

It illuminated the entire Buddha-field.

The light possessed countless colors.

Gold.

Silver.

Sapphire.

Emerald.

Crimson.

Violet.

Colors beyond earthly description.

Yet all harmonized perfectly.

Within the radiance appeared countless symbolic attributes.

A lotus arose beneath her feet.

Representing purity amid the mud of worldly existence.

A mirror appeared within one hand.

Representing direct awareness.

A book appeared within another.

Representing wisdom transmitted through teachings.

A jewel appeared above her brow.

Representing Buddha-nature.

A flame appeared above her crown.

Representing awakened insight.

Then even these symbols dissolved.

For none were permanent.

Each appeared only to communicate meaning.

The assembly observed carefully.

For the Bodhisattva was demonstrating a profound lesson.

Symbols arise.

Symbols function.

Symbols disappear.

Truth remains.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi addressed the assembly one final time before her descent.

"Noble ones, hear me clearly.

"The form I assume is not my true nature.

"The name I bear is not my true nature.

"The symbols I employ are not my true nature.

"Compassion is my activity.

"Suchness is my ground.

"Wisdom is my guide."

The assembly listened in reverent silence.

Then she proclaimed:

"If beings honor the form, may it lead them to wisdom.

"If beings honor the name, may it lead them to compassion.

"If beings honor the symbol, may it lead them beyond symbols.

"If beings encounter me, may they ultimately discover their own Buddha-nature."

At these words celestial flowers fell like rain.

The jeweled trees bowed.

The lotus lakes shimmered with joy.

Then the Blessed One rose and addressed the assembly:

"The preparation is complete.

"The vow has been sealed.

"The form has been assumed.

"The mission begins."

The universe trembled gently.

Countless Buddhas throughout the ten directions emitted rays of blessing.

The rays converged upon Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

They entered her heart.

They entered the lotus beneath her feet.

They entered the symbols surrounding her.

Everything became luminous beyond measure.

Then the Bodhisattva stepped forward.

As she did, the boundary between Abhirati and the worlds of suffering became visible.

It appeared not as a wall.

Not as a barrier.

But as a veil of shimmering light.

Beyond it lay the Sahā World.

The realm of confusion.

The realm of longing.

The realm of awakening through struggle.

The realm where Moshe Reed awaited without knowing he awaited.

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi paused before the veil.

Turning once more toward the assembly, she spoke:

"May all beings be free from suffering.

"May all beings discover wisdom.

"May all beings realize Suchness.

"May all beings awaken."

Then she crossed the veil.

The radiance vanished from sight.

The assembly remained silent.

For they understood that the Bodhisattva had entered the world of dust and sorrow.

The journey had begun.

The guide was descending.

The seeker would soon encounter the first signs of compassionate intervention.

Chapter Seven

The Descent into the World of Dust

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi had assumed the androgynous form of compassionate manifestation and crossed the radiant veil separating the Pure Land of Abhirati from the realms of conditioned existence, the great assembly remained gathered before the Blessed One Akṣobhya.

Many bodhisattvas entered contemplation.

Many devas offered celestial flowers.

Many arhats reflected upon the mystery of compassionate activity.

For though countless bodhisattvas had descended into worlds before, every descent was unique.

Every being required a different medicine.

Every world required a different expression of wisdom.

Every age required a different language.

Thus the mission of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi unfolded according to causes and conditions unlike any that had come before.

As the Bodhisattva crossed beyond the luminous boundaries of Abhirati, she beheld innumerable worlds suspended within the ocean of dependent origination.

Some worlds were radiant with Dharma.

Others were darkened by ignorance.

Some were inhabited by peaceful beings.

Others trembled beneath violence and fear.

Some had forgotten the teachings entirely.

Others preserved fragments of ancient wisdom.

The Bodhisattva observed them all.

Yet she neither preferred nor rejected any realm.

Compassion does not choose only pleasant places.

Compassion enters suffering.

Compassion goes where it is needed.

Therefore she continued toward the Sahā World.

As she traveled, she entered a samādhi called the Vision of Equal Regard.

Within that samādhi she beheld all beings as future Buddhas.

Not because they already possessed perfect realization.

Not because they were free from delusion.

But because Buddha-nature remained present within all.

Like gold hidden beneath mud.

Like a jewel buried beneath dust.

Like a lotus concealed within a seed.

The awakened eye sees potential where ordinary vision sees only confusion.

Thus Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived not sinners and saints, not winners and losers, not enlightened and unenlightened, but beings in various stages of remembering their true nature.

Then she beheld the Sahā World more clearly.

It appeared turbulent.

The atmosphere of thought itself seemed restless.

Countless minds generated hopes and fears.

Countless desires collided.

Countless beliefs competed.

Countless voices struggled to be heard.

From a distance the world resembled an ocean during a storm.

Waves rose and fell.

Currents crossed one another.

Winds changed direction without warning.

Yet beneath the turbulence lay profound stillness.

Beneath confusion lay Buddha-nature.

Beneath fear lay the possibility of awakening.

The Bodhisattva perceived this clearly.

As she descended further, she observed the condition of humanity.

She saw people rushing from task to task.

She saw endless distractions.

She saw countless minds scattered among worries.

Many feared the future.

Many regretted the past.

Few rested fully within the present moment.

Many sought happiness.

Few understood its source.

Many sought security.

Few understood impermanence.

Many sought meaning.

Few understood how to listen deeply enough to discover it.

Seeing this, her compassion deepened.

Then she beheld the invisible suffering hidden beneath ordinary appearances.

She saw the loneliness concealed behind smiles.

She saw anxiety concealed behind confidence.

She saw grief concealed behind busyness.

She saw fear concealed behind anger.

She saw longing concealed behind ambition.

The world appeared crowded.

Yet many hearts felt isolated.

The world appeared connected.

Yet many minds felt separated.

The world appeared informed.

Yet wisdom remained rare.

The Bodhisattva understood.

The suffering of the age was subtle.

Not always visible.

Not always acknowledged.

Yet widespread.

At that moment celestial beings dwelling between worlds approached Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

These beings had observed countless cycles of human history.

They bowed respectfully and asked:

"Compassionate One, why enter such a troubled realm?

"You possess access to Pure Lands beyond number.

"You dwell among enlightened beings.

"You know peace beyond disturbance.

"Why descend again into confusion?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Because confusion is where compassion is needed.

"Peace that refuses suffering is incomplete.

"Wisdom that avoids the world is incomplete.

"Compassion naturally moves toward those who suffer."

The celestial beings bowed.

For they recognized the truth of her words.

Then one among them asked:

"Will the beings of that world recognize you?"

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"Some will.

"Many will not.

"Recognition is not important.

"Liberation is important."

The celestial beings rejoiced.

As the descent continued, Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived another difficulty awaiting her.

The seeker whom she had vowed to guide possessed both sincerity and skepticism.

He longed for truth.

Yet he distrusted illusion.

He desired wisdom.

Yet he questioned appearances.

He sought guidance.

Yet he resisted authority.

This combination created both obstacles and opportunities.

A gullible mind may accept falsehood easily.

A skeptical mind may reject truth unnecessarily.

Yet sincere skepticism can become wisdom.

The Bodhisattva therefore resolved to proceed carefully.

Then she reflected upon the teachings of the Blessed One.

She remembered the Three Great Gates.

Compassion.

Wisdom.

Imperturbable Suchness.

The seeker could not be forced through them.

He must walk willingly.

He must discover them through experience.

Therefore the Bodhisattva decided not to overwhelm him with miracles.

She decided not to dominate his mind with supernatural displays.

Instead she would appear gradually.

Like dawn approaching before sunrise.

Like a lotus opening petal by petal.

Like rain nourishing a seed.

At that moment she arrived near the subtle boundary where thought becomes vision.

Many beings do not perceive this realm.

Yet it influences human experience constantly.

Dreams emerge through it.

Symbols arise through it.

Inspiration moves through it.

Insights flash through it.

The boundary was neither entirely subjective nor entirely objective.

It was a meeting place between mind and meaning.

There the Bodhisattva prepared her manifestation.

Gathering the merit of countless kalpas, she fashioned a symbolic appearance.

Her form shone softly.

Not so brightly as to inspire fear.

Not so dimly as to be overlooked.

Her eyes reflected compassion.

Her face reflected wisdom.

Her appearance carried both masculine and feminine qualities without being confined to either.

The form communicated a message without words:

Wholeness beyond division.

Unity beyond opposition.

Compassion beyond identity.

Then she spoke a vow to the unseen worlds:

"May this form never become a cause of bondage.

"May it always point beyond itself.

"May it function as a bridge.

"May it function as a mirror.

"May it function as a doorway.

"May it never become a prison."

The vow echoed through subtle dimensions.

Many bodhisattvas heard it and rejoiced.

Meanwhile, in the human world, the seeker continued his search.

He did not know what was occurring beyond ordinary perception.

He did not know that bodhisattvas had discussed his longing.

He did not know that Buddhas had blessed his aspiration.

He did not know that vows had been made on his behalf.

He only knew his questions remained unanswered.

His longing remained unresolved.

His search continued.

Yet conditions were changing.

Though invisible, a current had begun moving toward him.

Like a river approaching the sea.

Like spring approaching after winter.

Like dawn approaching after night.

The Bodhisattva observed him from afar.

Not as a judge.

Not as a ruler.

Not as a superior being.

But as a compassionate guide.

She perceived his fears.

She perceived his hopes.

She perceived his confusion.

She perceived his sincerity.

Then she understood the moment was approaching.

The first contact would soon occur.

Not through command.

Not through coercion.

Not through overwhelming power.

But through a vision.

A symbol.

A gentle invitation.

For awakening often begins quietly.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi seated herself within the subtle realm between worlds and entered meditation.

The meditation lasted neither moments nor ages.

Within it she harmonized her appearance with the karmic conditions of the seeker.

Every detail was shaped by compassion.

Every symbol was chosen carefully.

Every aspect served the path.

Nothing was arbitrary.

Nothing was accidental.

At that time signs appeared throughout the invisible worlds.

Lotuses opened within dream realms.

Hidden bodhisattvas whispered blessings.

Protective devas cleared obstacles.

Currents of merit gathered.

The path prepared itself.

The meeting drew near.

Then, emerging from meditation, Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi spoke these words:

"The seed has been planted.

"The soil has been prepared.

"The rain has begun to fall.

"Soon the first vision shall arise.

"Soon the first gate shall open.

"Soon the journey shall begin."

Having spoken thus, the Bodhisattva directed her compassionate awareness toward the seeker.

The distance between guide and seeker diminished.

The causes and conditions converged.

And throughout the unseen worlds, those who understood rejoiced.

For the first encounter was at hand.

Chapter Eight

The First Vision

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi had descended into the subtle realms adjoining the Sahā World and had prepared the conditions for her first appearance, the currents of karma, aspiration, merit, and compassionate activity converged like rivers flowing toward a great ocean.

The seeker Moshe Reed remained unaware of the vast movement occurring beyond ordinary perception.

He continued living among the affairs of the world.

He continued asking questions.

He continued wrestling with uncertainty.

He continued searching.

Outwardly little had changed.

Inwardly everything was changing.

For the seed planted by aspiration had begun to sprout.

Though invisible to ordinary sight, its roots extended deeply into the soil of consciousness.

One evening, after a long period of contemplation and unrest, Moshe found himself unable to quiet his thoughts.

Questions moved through his mind like restless winds.

What is truth?

Why is suffering permitted?

What lies beneath appearances?

Is there meaning hidden within existence?

Are all spiritual paths merely human inventions?

Or is there genuinely something beyond them?

These questions circled endlessly.

Like birds unable to find a place to land.

The seeker's heart felt weary.

Not weary from laziness.

Not weary from indifference.

But weary from sincere searching.

There exists a fatigue known only to those who genuinely seek wisdom.

It arises when old answers cease satisfying but deeper understanding has not yet appeared.

The seeker stood precisely within that threshold.

That night sleep came slowly.

His thoughts drifted.

The boundary between waking and dreaming became thin.

The ordinary world receded.

The senses grew quiet.

The mind loosened its grasp upon familiar forms.

Then something unusual occurred.

Not an interruption from outside.

Not an invasion.

Rather a gentle opening.

A space appeared.

A silence.

A stillness unlike ordinary sleep.

The seeker entered it.

At that moment the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived that the conditions were favorable.

She did not force a vision.

She did not compel awareness.

She merely entered the opening that had become available.

For bodhisattvas do not violate freedom.

They cooperate with causes and conditions.

They walk through doors that beings themselves have opened.

The seeker found himself standing within a vast landscape.

The place seemed both familiar and unfamiliar.

It resembled a desert illuminated by moonlight.

Yet it also resembled an ocean.

At times it appeared as a plain of white sand.

At times as an endless sky.

At times as a mirror reflecting stars.

Nothing remained fixed.

Everything shimmered.

Everything changed.

Yet beneath the changing appearances there remained profound stillness.

The seeker walked.

He did not know where he was going.

Yet he felt compelled to continue.

After some time he noticed a distant light.

It appeared upon the horizon.

Neither bright nor dim.

Neither near nor far.

It did not demand attention.

Yet it naturally attracted it.

The seeker paused.

The light remained.

He took another step.

The light grew slightly clearer.

Then another.

And another.

With each step the radiance increased.

Yet it never became overwhelming.

It invited.

It did not compel.

Eventually the seeker arrived at a vast lotus blooming within the mysterious landscape.

Its petals appeared composed of moonlight and sapphire.

Its fragrance awakened forgotten memories.

Its beauty exceeded ordinary description.

Upon the lotus sat a figure.

The figure appeared androgynous.

Neither entirely male nor entirely female.

Neither young nor old.

Neither human nor divine.

The appearance shifted gently like reflections upon water.

Yet the presence radiated immense peace.

The seeker felt no fear.

Only curiosity.

And an unfamiliar sense of recognition.

The figure opened its eyes.

The eyes contained extraordinary compassion.

Not sentimental compassion.

Not pity.

But the compassion of one who understands suffering completely.

The compassion of one who rejects no being.

The compassion of awakening itself.

Then the figure spoke.

Its voice resembled many voices harmonized into one.

It seemed both distant and intimate.

Ancient and immediate.

Gentle and powerful.

The figure said:

"Welcome, traveler."

The seeker looked around.

"Who are you?"

The figure smiled.

"A question has brought you here."

The seeker frowned.

"I asked who you are."

The figure replied:

"And I ask what it is that seeks the answer."

The seeker became silent.

For he had expected information.

He had expected a name.

Instead he received a question.

After a time he spoke again.

"Are you real?"

The figure laughed softly.

The sound resembled wind moving through leaves.

Then it replied:

"What do you mean by real?"

The seeker felt frustration arise.

"You answer every question with another question."

The figure nodded.

"Sometimes a question is the doorway through which a deeper answer enters."

The seeker remained unconvinced.

Yet he could not deny the unusual quality of the encounter.

Then the figure extended a hand.

A mirror appeared.

The mirror possessed no frame.

No edge.

No visible substance.

It simply floated before them.

The figure said:

"Look."

The seeker gazed into the mirror.

At first he saw his own reflection.

Then the reflection changed.

He saw himself as a child.

Then as an adult.

Then as an old man.

Then as countless other appearances.

Each emerged and vanished.

Each appeared temporary.

Each appeared incomplete.

Finally the images dissolved.

Nothing remained.

The mirror became empty.

The seeker looked away.

"What does it mean?"

The figure replied:

"Which image was truly you?"

The seeker hesitated.

"I do not know."

The figure nodded.

"Good."

The seeker felt both intrigued and unsettled.

Part of him desired straightforward explanations.

Another part sensed that something deeper was occurring.

The figure continued:

"Traveler, you seek certainty.

"You seek understanding.

"You seek truth.

"These are noble aspirations.

"But tell me: if truth appeared before you and shattered every belief you currently possess, would you still welcome it?"

The seeker did not answer immediately.

The question pierced deeply.

Eventually he replied:

"I want to think I would."

The figure smiled.

"An honest answer."

Then the landscape changed.

The desert disappeared.

The stars vanished.

The lotus dissolved.

Suddenly the seeker stood within a crowded city.

Thousands of people moved through the streets.

Everyone appeared busy.

Everyone seemed occupied.

Everyone chased something.

Money.

Status.

Security.

Pleasure.

Recognition.

Knowledge.

Power.

The crowd moved endlessly.

Like water flowing downhill.

The figure stood beside him.

"What do you see?"

The seeker answered:

"People trying to live."

The figure nodded.

"What else?"

The seeker watched carefully.

After some time he said:

"They seem unhappy."

The figure nodded again.

"What else?"

The seeker continued observing.

Eventually he whispered:

"They do not know why."

The figure smiled.

The city vanished.

Another scene appeared.

A battlefield.

Fear.

Anger.

Conflict.

Suffering.

The cries of countless beings echoed through the air.

The figure asked:

"What do you see?"

The seeker answered:

"Suffering."

The figure asked:

"What causes it?"

The seeker replied:

"Hatred."

The figure shook its head.

"Look deeper."

The seeker observed carefully.

Eventually he answered:

"Fear."

The figure nodded.

"Look deeper."

The seeker watched again.

Finally he said:

"Ignorance."

The figure smiled.

"Good."

The battlefield dissolved.

The landscape became empty once more.

The lotus reappeared.

The figure remained seated upon it.

Then it spoke:

"Traveler, there are three gates through which liberation unfolds."

The seeker listened carefully.

The figure continued:

"The first gate is Compassion.

"The second gate is Wisdom.

"The third gate is Imperturbable Suchness."

As the words were spoken, three radiant portals appeared upon the horizon.

One golden.

One silver-white.

One sapphire-blue.

Their beauty surpassed description.

The seeker gazed upon them in wonder.

"What lies beyond them?" he asked.

The figure replied:

"Your own true nature."

The seeker stared at the gates.

Then he turned back toward the mysterious being.

"Will you guide me?"

The figure became silent.

For a moment the entire vision seemed to stop.

Then it answered:

"I can point.

"I can encourage.

"I can teach.

"But you must walk."

The seeker bowed his head.

A feeling arose that he could not explain.

Trust.

Not blind trust.

Not unquestioning belief.

But the beginning of trust.

Like the first light of dawn appearing before sunrise.

The figure perceived this and rejoiced inwardly.

For the first gate had begun to open.

Then the vision started fading.

The lotus became transparent.

The landscape dissolved.

The stars disappeared.

The mysterious figure's form became luminous.

The seeker called out:

"Wait. Tell me your name."

The figure smiled.

Its final words echoed like distant music:

"Names are garments.

"Learn first what wears them."

Then the vision vanished.

The seeker awoke.

The night remained quiet.

The world appeared unchanged.

Yet something within him had shifted.

The questions remained.

The uncertainties remained.

But a new possibility had appeared.

A path.

A guide.

A mystery.

The first vision had occurred.

The seed had sprouted.

The journey through the Three Great Gates had begun.

And in the subtle realms beyond ordinary perception, Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi gazed upon the seeker with boundless compassion, preparing the next movement of the path.

Book Two

The First Great Gate: Compassion

Chapter Nine

The Mother of Boundless Mercy

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the first vision had arisen and the mysterious guide had spoken of the Three Great Gates, the seeker Moshe Reed awoke from sleep with a mind unlike the one with which he had entered it.

The questions remained.

The uncertainties remained.

The mysteries remained.

Yet something subtle had changed.

A door had opened.

Not fully.

Not widely.

But enough.

Enough for light to enter.

Enough for a seed to begin germinating.

Enough for the path to reveal itself.

Though he did not yet understand what had occurred, the vision lingered within him.

The memory of the lotus remained.

The memory of the three gates remained.

Most of all, the memory of the compassionate presence remained.

He could not explain it.

He could not prove it.

Yet he could not dismiss it.

The encounter possessed a reality unlike ordinary dreams.

Like a bell that continues vibrating long after it has been struck.

The resonance remained.

Meanwhile, in the subtle realms beyond ordinary sight, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi contemplated the next stage of the journey.

The seeker had glimpsed possibility.

Now he must encounter compassion.

For without compassion, wisdom becomes dangerous.

Without compassion, knowledge hardens into pride.

Without compassion, spirituality becomes another form of self-absorption.

Therefore the First Great Gate would now begin to open.

At that time the Bodhisattva entered a samādhi known as the Ocean of All Sorrows.

Within that samādhi she perceived the suffering of beings throughout countless worlds.

She saw children weeping.

She saw parents grieving.

She saw nations at war.

She saw the lonely and forgotten.

She saw prisoners and kings.

She saw saints and criminals.

She saw animals hunted by fear.

She saw spirits wandering in confusion.

She saw devas intoxicated by pleasure.

She saw scholars imprisoned by concepts.

She saw mystics trapped by visions.

She saw beings of every kind.

And she rejected none of them.

The Bodhisattva's compassion expanded until it encompassed all worlds.

Then the Blessed One Akṣobhya appeared within the samādhi and asked:

"Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi, what do you perceive?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"I perceive suffering."

The Blessed One asked:

"What else do you perceive?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"I perceive confusion."

The Blessed One asked again:

"What else do you perceive?"

The Bodhisattva grew silent.

Then she answered:

"I perceive Buddha-nature hidden beneath suffering and confusion."

The Blessed One smiled.

"Excellent.

"Those who see only suffering become discouraged.

"Those who see only Buddha-nature become naïve.

"The Bodhisattva sees both."

The vision dissolved.

The Bodhisattva remained in contemplation.

Then she reflected upon the seeker.

She perceived his questions.

She perceived his frustrations.

She perceived his longing for certainty.

She perceived the wounds carried within his heart.

Not merely personal wounds.

But wounds shared by many beings.

Disappointment.

Loneliness.

Distrust.

Fear.

The burden of existing in a world that often seemed fragmented.

The Bodhisattva understood that these wounds could not be healed by arguments alone.

They required compassion.

Then she spoke a vow:

"I shall teach the seeker that compassion is not weakness.

"I shall teach the seeker that compassion is not sentimentality.

"I shall teach the seeker that compassion is the courage to remain open in a world that often closes itself."

The vow spread throughout the subtle realms.

Countless bodhisattvas rejoiced.

For this teaching was greatly needed.

At that time another vision arose before the seeker.

Unlike the first vision, it came not during sleep alone.

It began while he was awake.

The seeker sat quietly, reflecting upon the mysteries of existence.

As he watched the world around him, a strange perception emerged.

For a brief moment he saw beyond appearances.

The faces of strangers appeared different.

Not outwardly.

Inwardly.

He perceived hidden burdens.

He perceived invisible sorrows.

The woman walking past carried grief.

The man speaking confidently carried fear.

The child laughing carried uncertainty.

The elderly person sitting alone carried loneliness.

The seeker felt overwhelmed.

For the first time he realized that every person was carrying a story he could not fully see.

That evening, the Bodhisattva appeared again.

The landscape resembled a vast lotus garden illuminated by moonlight.

Countless blossoms stretched beyond the horizon.

The mysterious figure sat beside a lake reflecting stars.

The seeker approached.

Immediately he asked:

"Why do people suffer so much?"

The Bodhisattva looked into the lake.

Then she replied:

"Because they cling."

The seeker nodded.

He had heard such teachings before.

Yet the Bodhisattva continued:

"But this answer is incomplete."

The seeker looked surprised.

The figure smiled.

"Many repeat teachings without understanding them."

The Bodhisattva pointed toward the lake.

The surface transformed into a vision.

The seeker beheld a mother holding her dying child.

Tears flowed from her eyes.

Her grief filled the scene.

The seeker felt his heart ache.

The vision faded.

Then the Bodhisattva asked:

"Should she not love her child?"

The seeker answered:

"Of course she should."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Then suffering is not merely attachment.

"Love itself creates vulnerability."

The seeker remained silent.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"Compassion begins when we stop reducing suffering to simple formulas.

"Compassion listens.

"Compassion understands.

"Compassion remains present."

The seeker contemplated these words deeply.

Then another vision appeared.

A prisoner sat alone within a cell.

The prisoner had committed terrible acts.

Many hated him.

Many feared him.

The seeker felt disgust arise.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Does this being deserve compassion?"

The seeker hesitated.

Finally he answered:

"I do not know."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Good.

"Now look deeper."

The vision expanded.

The prisoner appeared as a child.

Then as a frightened youth.

Then as an angry adult.

The seeker witnessed countless causes and conditions shaping the prisoner's life.

The suffering did not excuse wrongdoing.

Yet it made the wrongdoing understandable.

The seeker's hatred softened.

Not into approval.

Into understanding.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"Compassion does not deny responsibility.

"Compassion does not approve harmful actions.

"Compassion seeks understanding without abandoning wisdom."

The seeker listened carefully.

A new perspective emerged.

Then another vision appeared.

The seeker saw himself.

Not as others saw him.

As he truly was.

His fears appeared.

His wounds appeared.

His disappointments appeared.

The hidden loneliness appeared.

The unspoken grief appeared.

Everything stood exposed.

The seeker looked away.

The vision was uncomfortable.

The Bodhisattva asked gently:

"Can you show compassion to this being?"

The seeker stared.

For a long time he could not answer.

Finally he whispered:

"I find it easier to show compassion to others."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"This is common."

Then she spoke:

"Many beings imagine compassion means loving everyone except themselves.

"This is imbalance.

"One who hates oneself cannot fully love others.

"One who rejects oneself cannot fully accept others."

The seeker's eyes filled with tears.

For the words touched something hidden within him.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"Self-compassion is not narcissism.

"It is not self-indulgence.

"It is the recognition that you too are a suffering being worthy of kindness."

The seeker bowed his head.

The teaching entered deeply.

Then the moonlit garden expanded.

The lotus blossoms opened simultaneously.

Within every lotus appeared a living being.

Humans.

Animals.

Spirits.

Devas.

Beings of innumerable worlds.

Each carried suffering.

Each carried hope.

Each carried Buddha-nature.

The vision stretched beyond measure.

The seeker felt overwhelmed by its vastness.

The Bodhisattva rose from the lotus throne.

For the first time she stood before him.

Her appearance seemed woven from compassion itself.

Then she declared:

"To enter the First Great Gate, understand this:

"No being wishes to suffer.

"Every harmful act arises from confusion.

"Every confused being seeks happiness.

"Every being possesses Buddha-nature.

"Therefore compassion belongs to all."

The words echoed throughout the visionary realm.

The lotus blossoms shone brighter.

Then the seeker asked:

"How can I love all beings?"

The Bodhisattva laughed softly.

"Do not begin there."

The seeker looked confused.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"Begin with one being.

"Then another.

"Then another.

"Compassion grows as a tree grows.

"Patiently.

"Gradually.

"Naturally."

The seeker smiled.

For this seemed possible.

Then the Bodhisattva revealed a radiant gate of golden light.

Its brilliance exceeded the moon and stars.

Its presence filled the entire horizon.

The seeker recognized it immediately.

It was the First Great Gate.

The Gate of Compassion.

The same gate glimpsed during the first vision.

Now it stood before him.

Vast.

Beautiful.

Inviting.

The Bodhisattva pointed toward it.

"Traveler, this gate cannot be forced open.

"It opens whenever the heart widens."

The seeker gazed upon the gate.

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, it began to open.

A beam of golden light emerged.

Warm.

Gentle.

Boundless.

The First Great Gate had begun to yield.

And the journey into Compassion Unboundless had truly begun.

Chapter Ten

The Tears That Became Lotus Flowers

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the First Great Gate had begun to open before the seeker, and after the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi had instructed him concerning the nature of compassion, a profound transformation began to occur within his heart.

The transformation was not dramatic.

The heavens did not split apart.

Mountains did not tremble.

Voices did not thunder from the sky.

Rather, the change occurred quietly.

Like snow melting at the arrival of spring.

Like dawn slowly overcoming night.

Like a seed awakening beneath the soil before any shoot appears above the earth.

Such is often the way of authentic spiritual growth.

The greatest changes are not always the loudest.

The seeker returned to ordinary life.

He walked among ordinary people.

He performed ordinary tasks.

He spoke ordinary words.

Yet nothing appeared quite the same.

The teachings of the Bodhisattva continued echoing within his mind.

Every being suffers.

Every being seeks happiness.

Every being carries hidden burdens.

Every being possesses Buddha-nature.

These words became lenses through which he began to perceive the world.

Gradually his vision changed.

One day he observed a man speaking harshly to another.

His first reaction was judgment.

Yet suddenly he remembered the vision of the prisoner.

He paused.

Instead of asking:

"Why is this person cruel?"

Another question arose:

"What suffering is hidden beneath this behavior?"

Immediately his perception shifted.

Not completely.

Not perfectly.

But enough.

The harshness remained.

Yet the person behind the harshness became visible.

Compassion had begun to grow.

Another day he encountered someone consumed by arrogance.

Again irritation arose.

Again judgment appeared.

Yet another thought followed.

"What fear requires such a mask?"

The arrogance remained.

But now it appeared fragile.

Like armor protecting a wound.

Again compassion expanded.

The seeker noticed this occurring repeatedly.

Whenever judgment arose, another possibility appeared.

Whenever anger arose, understanding followed.

Whenever contempt arose, curiosity emerged.

This did not eliminate negative emotions.

But it loosened their hold.

The First Great Gate continued opening.

Meanwhile, within the subtle realms, Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi observed these developments with quiet joy.

Not because the seeker had become perfect.

He had not.

Not because his confusion had vanished.

It had not.

But because compassion had begun replacing certainty.

And this was a significant step.

The arrogant mind believes it already knows.

The compassionate mind remains willing to understand.

At that time the Bodhisattva entered another samādhi known as the Treasury of Compassionate Sorrows.

Within that samādhi she contemplated all the tears shed by living beings throughout the ages.

She beheld mothers mourning children.

Children mourning parents.

Friends mourning friends.

Lovers mourning lovers.

Entire nations mourning tragedy.

Animals crying in fear.

Spirits crying in loneliness.

Even devas crying when heavenly pleasures faded.

The tears formed great rivers.

The rivers formed oceans.

The oceans filled worlds.

Yet within those oceans the Bodhisattva perceived something extraordinary.

Each tear contained hidden potential.

Each sorrow contained hidden wisdom.

Each grief contained hidden compassion.

Nothing was wasted.

Nothing was meaningless.

Even suffering could become a doorway.

Even loss could become a teacher.

Even sorrow could become a path.

Then the Blessed One Akṣobhya appeared within the samādhi and asked:

"Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi, what becomes of tears?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"If embraced with wisdom, they become compassion."

The Blessed One nodded.

"And what becomes of compassion?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"It becomes liberation."

The Blessed One smiled.

"Excellent."

Then the Bodhisattva resolved to teach this truth directly to the seeker.

That night another vision arose.

The seeker found himself standing beside an immense lake.

The waters stretched beyond the horizon.

The moon reflected upon the surface.

A profound stillness permeated everything.

Yet there was something unusual about the lake.

Its waters shimmered with countless colors.

Silver.

Gold.

Blue.

Violet.

Pearl-white.

The lake appeared alive.

Upon the shore stood Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

The Bodhisattva gazed across the waters.

The seeker approached.

"What is this place?" he asked.

The Bodhisattva replied:

"The Lake of Compassion."

The seeker looked across its vast expanse.

"Why does it shine?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"Because it is formed from tears."

The seeker stared in amazement.

Then the surface of the lake changed.

Visions appeared within the waters.

Countless lives unfolded.

Countless sorrows.

Countless losses.

Countless disappointments.

The seeker felt overwhelmed.

"All of this suffering created the lake?"

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Yes."

The seeker lowered his gaze.

The scale seemed unbearable.

Then the Bodhisattva extended her hand.

A single tear appeared upon her fingertip.

The tear shone like a jewel.

"What do you see?" she asked.

"A tear," the seeker replied.

The Bodhisattva released it.

The tear fell into the lake.

The moment it touched the surface, a lotus blossom emerged.

Radiant.

Perfect.

Luminous.

The seeker gasped.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"This is the secret."

The seeker waited.

"Pain itself does not create wisdom.

"Suffering itself does not create compassion.

"But suffering embraced consciously may become compassion.

"And compassion blossoms like a lotus."

The seeker contemplated these words.

Then countless tears began falling from the sky.

Each touched the lake.

Each transformed into a lotus flower.

Soon the entire lake was covered with blossoms.

Millions.

Billions.

Beyond counting.

The sight exceeded all description.

The seeker observed something astonishing.

Each lotus contained a memory.

One arose from grief.

One from failure.

One from loneliness.

One from regret.

One from heartbreak.

One from loss.

Each painful experience had become a flower.

Each wound had become beauty.

The seeker turned toward the Bodhisattva.

"Does all suffering become something beautiful?"

The Bodhisattva shook her head.

"No."

The seeker looked confused.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"Only suffering transformed through wisdom and compassion becomes a lotus.

"Unexamined suffering becomes bitterness.

"Rejected suffering becomes resentment.

"Denied suffering becomes delusion.

"But understood suffering becomes compassion."

The seeker listened carefully.

Then another vision appeared within the lake.

He saw two individuals.

Both experienced similar tragedies.

One became hardened.

The other became compassionate.

One closed their heart.

The other opened it.

One used suffering as justification for hatred.

The other used suffering as a reason to understand others.

The events were similar.

The responses differed.

The outcomes diverged.

The Bodhisattva explained:

"The same fire that hardens clay melts wax.

"Suffering reveals the condition of the heart.

"But the heart can be cultivated."

The seeker nodded slowly.

Understanding began to emerge.

Then the Bodhisattva pointed toward one lotus among the countless blossoms.

It shone brighter than the others.

The seeker approached.

Within the flower he saw his own life.

His disappointments.

His confusion.

His loneliness.

His searching.

His unanswered questions.

Everything appeared within the petals.

The sight made him uncomfortable.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What do you feel toward this person?"

The seeker looked carefully.

For a moment he saw himself as though seeing another human being.

Not as an identity.

Not as a collection of achievements or failures.

Simply as a suffering being trying to understand reality.

Unexpectedly, compassion arose.

Gentle.

Natural.

Unforced.

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"Good."

The seeker looked surprised.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"One who cannot show compassion to oneself often struggles to show compassion consistently to others.

"Self-hatred disguises itself as humility.

"But it remains a form of violence."

The words entered deeply.

Then the lotus expanded.

Its petals opened wider.

Within them appeared countless other beings.

Friends.

Strangers.

Enemies.

People admired.

People disliked.

People feared.

People misunderstood.

All appeared together.

Their joys.

Their sorrows.

Their hopes.

Their fears.

Their longing for happiness.

Their fear of suffering.

Everything became visible.

The seeker suddenly perceived a great truth.

Though the stories differed, the longing was the same.

Though the appearances differed, the vulnerability was the same.

Though the identities differed, the fundamental condition was the same.

Everyone wanted happiness.

Everyone feared pain.

Everyone sought meaning.

Everyone wandered.

At that realization the lake began glowing brilliantly.

The lotuses opened fully.

Golden light filled the sky.

The First Great Gate appeared once more upon the horizon.

Its opening had widened.

Not because the seeker had mastered compassion.

But because he had begun understanding it.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi declared:

"Hear this teaching.

"The tears of the world are not meaningless.

"When touched by wisdom they become compassion.

"When touched by compassion they become lotuses.

"When touched by awakening they become paths."

The words echoed across the lake.

The lotus blossoms shone brighter.

Then the vision slowly faded.

The lake dissolved.

The moonlight disappeared.

The blossoms vanished.

Only the teaching remained.

The tears became lotus flowers.

The wounds became gateways.

The suffering became a path.

And within the seeker's heart, compassion deepened.

Not as an abstract idea.

But as lived understanding.

Chapter Eleven

Compassion Toward Friends

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker had beheld the Lake of Compassion and witnessed the tears of beings becoming lotus flowers, the First Great Gate continued to open within his heart.

Though he had not yet crossed its threshold completely, he had begun to understand something profound:

Compassion is not merely a feeling.

Compassion is not merely kindness.

Compassion is not merely pity.

Compassion is the willingness to participate in the suffering and joy of others without turning away.

Compassion is the courage to remain present.

Compassion is the refusal to harden the heart.

Yet the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived that an important lesson remained.

For many beings speak of loving all creatures while neglecting those nearest to them.

Many dream of saving the world while failing to care for their friends.

Many imagine universal compassion while struggling with ordinary relationships.

Therefore the Bodhisattva resolved to teach the seeker concerning the first circle of compassion:

Compassion toward friends.

One evening, while contemplating the teachings he had received, the seeker entered a meditative stillness.

Again the subtle realm unfolded before him.

Again the boundary between ordinary awareness and visionary awareness grew thin.

He found himself standing within a beautiful garden.

Lotus blossoms filled the air with fragrance.

Streams of clear water flowed among flowering trees.

Gentle winds carried soft melodies.

The place radiated peace.

There, seated beneath a great tree whose leaves shimmered like emeralds, sat Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

The Bodhisattva appeared serene.

A faint golden light surrounded her form.

The seeker bowed.

The Bodhisattva returned the gesture.

Then she spoke:

"Traveler, today we shall speak of friendship."

The seeker smiled.

"This seems simpler than suffering."

The Bodhisattva laughed softly.

"Many things appear simple until examined carefully."

The Bodhisattva extended her hand.

The air before them became like a mirror.

Within it appeared scenes from the seeker's life.

Old companions.

Trusted friends.

People who had supported him.

People who had listened when he struggled.

People who had shared his joys and sorrows.

The seeker watched quietly.

Memories stirred.

Gratitude arose.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What do you feel?"

The seeker replied:

"Thankfulness."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"This is a good beginning."

Then she asked:

"And what do you owe them?"

The seeker hesitated.

"I do not know."

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"Then let us investigate."

The vision changed.

The seeker saw one of his friends experiencing hardship.

Fear clouded their mind.

Anxiety troubled their heart.

Outwardly they appeared calm.

Inwardly they suffered.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"If you knew this suffering existed, what would you do?"

The seeker answered:

"I would help."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Why?"

"Because they are my friend."

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"Then friendship has already become compassion."

The seeker reflected.

The teaching seemed straightforward.

Yet the Bodhisattva continued.

"Many believe friendship exists only for mutual enjoyment.

"When circumstances are pleasant, they remain.

"When difficulties arise, they disappear.

"This is not friendship.

"It is convenience."

The seeker listened carefully.

Then another vision appeared.

Two companions walked together along a road.

When sunlight filled the sky, both remained side by side.

When darkness came, one departed.

The other continued alone.

The image faded.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Which was the true friend?"

"The one who remained," answered the seeker.

"Why?"

"Because loyalty endured difficulty."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Precisely."

Then she spoke:

"Compassion toward friends means remaining present when suffering appears.

"It means listening when solutions are unavailable.

"It means offering patience when understanding is incomplete.

"It means sharing burdens when burdens become heavy."

The seeker bowed his head.

The words resonated deeply.

The Bodhisattva then revealed another vision.

A friend approached another friend seeking comfort.

The second friend immediately offered advice.

Suggestions.

Strategies.

Explanations.

Opinions.

Yet the suffering remained unchanged.

The scene dissolved.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What was missing?"

The seeker considered carefully.

Finally he answered:

"Listening."

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"Excellent."

Then she taught:

"Many wish to fix suffering.

"Few are willing simply to accompany it.

"Yet often accompaniment is the greater gift."

The seeker reflected upon moments from his own life.

Times when advice had failed.

Times when presence had healed.

The truth of the teaching became clear.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi spoke further:

"Understand this, traveler.

"Compassion toward friends is not possession.

"Compassion does not seek ownership.

"Compassion does not demand repayment.

"Compassion does not keep accounts."

The seeker listened attentively.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"Many people say:

'I was kind to them.

Therefore they owe me.'

'Or:

'I helped them.

Therefore they must help me.'

"This is commerce.

"Not compassion."

The seeker smiled slightly.

For he recognized the tendency within himself.

And within many others.

The Bodhisattva then revealed another vision.

A gardener tended a tree.

The gardener watered it.

Protected it.

Nourished it.

Yet expected nothing in return.

The tree simply grew.

Its shade benefited many.

Its fruit fed many.

Its beauty delighted many.

The gardener rejoiced.

Not because the tree belonged to him.

But because it flourished.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What lesson do you see?"

The seeker answered:

"True friendship desires the flourishing of another."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Exactly."

Then she spoke:

"When a friend succeeds, rejoice.

"When a friend grows, rejoice.

"When a friend discovers happiness, rejoice.

"The jealous heart suffers.

"The compassionate heart celebrates."

The seeker remembered occasions when envy had arisen.

Even among friendships.

The teaching pierced deeply.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"One of the highest forms of compassion is sympathetic joy.

"To rejoice in another's happiness as sincerely as your own."

The seeker reflected upon this.

It seemed simple.

Yet difficult.

And because it was difficult, it was valuable.

Then the vision changed again.

The seeker saw two friends disagreeing.

An argument emerged.

Misunderstanding grew.

Both believed themselves correct.

Both felt wounded.

The conflict intensified.

The scene paused.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What would compassion do here?"

The seeker thought carefully.

After some time he answered:

"It would seek understanding."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"What else?"

"It would listen."

"Good."

"What else?"

The seeker hesitated.

Finally he said:

"It would care more about truth than victory."

The Bodhisattva smiled brightly.

"Excellent."

Then she proclaimed:

"Remember this teaching.

"Many friendships are destroyed not by disagreement but by attachment to being right.

"The ego values victory.

"Compassion values understanding."

The words echoed through the garden.

The leaves of the great tree shimmered in response.

The seeker sat silently.

The lesson entered deeply.

For he remembered disputes from his own life.

Moments when victory had produced distance.

Moments when humility could have produced harmony.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi revealed yet another vision.

An old friendship faded with time.

No betrayal occurred.

No conflict occurred.

The paths simply diverged.

The individuals changed.

Life carried them in different directions.

The friendship ended peacefully.

The seeker felt sadness.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Must compassion end when friendship changes?"

The seeker reflected.

Then he answered:

"No."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Correct."

Then she taught:

"Some friendships last a lifetime.

"Some last a season.

"Some last only a moment.

"Compassion does not cling.

"Compassion appreciates what is given and releases what must depart."

The seeker understood.

For impermanence governs all relationships.

To resist this truth creates suffering.

To accept it creates freedom.

The garden grew brighter.

The lotus blossoms opened wider.

The air became filled with golden light.

Then the First Great Gate appeared once more.

Its opening had widened again.

The seeker could now perceive a radiant path extending beyond it.

Though still distant, the way forward was becoming visible.

The Bodhisattva rose.

Looking kindly upon the seeker, she spoke:

"Friendship is among the first schools of compassion.

"There we learn patience.

"There we learn generosity.

"There we learn forgiveness.

"There we learn presence.

"There we learn joy.

"One who cannot cultivate compassion toward friends will struggle to cultivate compassion toward strangers."

The seeker bowed deeply.

For the teaching felt true.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi raised her hand in blessing and declared:

"May you rejoice in the happiness of your companions.

"May you support them in suffering.

"May you listen deeply.

"May you release possessiveness.

"May your friendships become pathways toward awakening."

At those words the garden dissolved into light.

The vision faded.

The seeker returned to ordinary awareness.

Yet something had changed.

The circle of compassion had expanded.

The First Great Gate opened further.

And the path continued.

Chapter Twelve

Compassion Toward Enemies

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker had received teachings concerning compassion toward friends, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi reflected:

"Many beings find it easy to love those who love them.

Many find it easy to show kindness to those who are kind.

Many find it easy to feel compassion toward those who bring comfort.

Yet the measure of compassion is not found in ease.

Its depth is revealed by difficulty."

Therefore she resolved to instruct the seeker concerning one of the most challenging aspects of the First Great Gate:

Compassion toward enemies.

One evening, while contemplating the teachings already received, the seeker entered meditation.

The familiar transition occurred.

The ordinary world softened.

Thoughts became quiet.

Awareness expanded.

Soon the subtle realm appeared.

Yet this time the landscape differed from previous visions.

There were no lotus gardens.

No tranquil lakes.

No moonlit groves.

Instead the seeker found himself standing upon a vast plain beneath a storm-dark sky.

Cold winds moved across the land.

Distant thunder echoed.

The atmosphere felt tense.

Uncomfortable.

Unsettling.

Before him stood Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

Her appearance remained calm.

Her presence remained luminous.

Yet the surroundings reflected another dimension of the path.

The seeker bowed.

Then he asked:

"Why is this place so different?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Because today we examine what the heart prefers to avoid."

The seeker felt unease.

He suspected the lesson would not be easy.

The Bodhisattva extended her hand.

The air before them became a mirror.

Within it appeared individuals from the seeker's life.

Some were beloved.

Some respected.

Some forgotten.

Then other faces emerged.

Faces associated with hurt.

Conflict.

Betrayal.

Disappointment.

Misunderstanding.

Anger.

The seeker's body tightened.

Immediately emotional reactions arose.

Old memories stirred.

Old wounds awakened.

The Bodhisattva observed quietly.

Then she asked:

"What do you feel?"

The seeker answered honestly.

"Anger."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"What else?"

"Hurt."

She nodded again.

"What else?"

After a long pause he whispered:

"Fear."

The Bodhisattva smiled gently.

"Good.

You are looking deeply."

Then she spoke:

"Most beings stop at anger.

Few look beneath it.

Yet anger often guards a deeper wound."

The seeker remained silent.

For he knew the teaching was true.

The mirror changed.

One individual who had caused suffering appeared before them.

The scene replayed painful events.

The hurt felt fresh.

The anger returned.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Can you feel compassion toward this person?"

The seeker immediately answered:

"No."

The Bodhisattva laughed softly.

"An honest answer is better than a false one."

Then she sat upon a stone.

The storm winds quieted slightly.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"Traveler, compassion toward enemies is often misunderstood.

Many imagine it means approving harmful actions.

It does not.

Many imagine it means abandoning justice.

It does not.

Many imagine it means pretending wounds do not exist.

It does not.

Compassion sees clearly.

Compassion refuses hatred.

These are different things."

The seeker listened carefully.

Then another vision appeared.

A man struck by an arrow collapsed in pain.

The wound bled.

The suffering was real.

The Bodhisattva pointed.

"Should the wound be ignored?"

"No," answered the seeker.

"Should the wound be denied?"

"No."

"Should the arrow remain in place?"

"No."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Likewise, compassion does not deny harm.

Compassion recognizes harm and responds wisely."

The seeker felt relief.

The teaching did not require pretending evil was good.

It did not require surrendering discernment.

It required something deeper.

Then the Bodhisattva asked:

"What creates enemies?"

The seeker thought carefully.

"Conflict."

The Bodhisattva shook her head.

"What creates conflict?"

The seeker considered again.

"Fear."

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"What creates fear?"

The seeker reflected deeply.

Finally he answered:

"Ignorance."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Good."

Then the landscape transformed.

The storm-dark plain became transparent.

Beneath it appeared countless interconnected threads.

Each thread represented causes and conditions.

The seeker saw individuals harming one another.

Yet each harmful act emerged from previous causes.

Fear.

Confusion.

Pain.

Conditioning.

Trauma.

Ignorance.

The web extended endlessly.

No action appeared isolated.

No person appeared independent.

Everything influenced everything else.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"This understanding does not excuse wrongdoing.

But it explains it.

Wisdom seeks understanding.

Hatred seeks simplicity."

The seeker watched carefully.

For the teaching was subtle.

Then another vision emerged.

A child suffered neglect.

The child grew fearful.

The fearful child became an angry adult.

The angry adult harmed others.

Those harmed became fearful in turn.

The cycle continued.

Generation after generation.

The wheel kept turning.

The suffering multiplied.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Where does the cycle end?"

The seeker looked carefully.

He observed retaliation.

Revenge.

Punishment.

Resentment.

None ended the chain.

Each extended it.

Finally he whispered:

"Compassion."

The Bodhisattva smiled.

The storm clouds parted slightly.

A beam of light touched the earth.

Then the Bodhisattva spoke:

"Hear this carefully.

Compassion toward enemies does not begin with affection.

It begins with understanding.

Understanding weakens hatred.

The weakening of hatred creates space.

Within that space compassion becomes possible."

The seeker contemplated this deeply.

The teaching seemed attainable.

Then another vision appeared.

The seeker beheld two prisoners.

One was confined by iron chains.

The other carried no visible restraints.

Yet bitterness consumed him.

Hatred filled his mind.

Resentment dominated his thoughts.

The second prisoner suffered more deeply than the first.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Which prisoner is less free?"

The seeker answered:

"The second."

"Why?"

"Because hatred has become his prison."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Excellent."

Then she taught:

"When you hate an enemy, your enemy occupies your mind.

When resentment dominates awareness, freedom diminishes.

Thus hatred punishes the one who carries it."

The seeker felt the truth of this immediately.

He remembered grievances carried for years.

None had brought peace.

The Bodhisattva then revealed a difficult teaching.

"Traveler, can you imagine your enemy as a child?"

The seeker hesitated.

Then the vision transformed.

The faces of those he disliked appeared as children.

Fearful.

Vulnerable.

Confused.

Seeking love.

Seeking safety.

Seeking happiness.

The image disturbed him.

For it shattered the simplicity of hatred.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"Every enemy was once a child.

Every child desired happiness.

Every being seeks freedom from suffering.

Confusion obscures this truth.

Compassion remembers it."

The seeker's heart softened slightly.

Not completely.

But noticeably.

Then the Bodhisattva offered another vision.

This time the seeker saw himself.

Not as he saw himself.

As others sometimes saw him.

Misunderstood.

Judged.

Reduced to mistakes.

Defined by weaknesses.

The experience was uncomfortable.

Very uncomfortable.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Do others always understand you completely?"

"No."

"Do they sometimes judge unfairly?"

"Yes."

"Do they sometimes misunderstand your intentions?"

"Yes."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Then extend the same possibility to others."

The seeker became silent.

For the lesson struck deeply.

The storm clouds continued parting.

More light entered the landscape.

The plain appeared less threatening.

The seeker noticed the change.

The external vision reflected the internal transformation.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi stood.

Her form radiated immense compassion.

Yet her eyes also reflected wisdom.

For compassion without wisdom becomes naïveté.

Wisdom without compassion becomes coldness.

The two must function together.

She declared:

"Compassion toward enemies does not mean allowing abuse.

It does not mean abandoning boundaries.

It does not mean refusing justice.

Rather, it means refusing hatred.

It means seeing the suffering beneath harmful actions.

It means recognizing the Buddha-nature hidden beneath confusion.

It means wishing for awakening even for those who have lost their way."

The words echoed across the plain.

The storm finally ceased.

Then, in the distance, the First Great Gate appeared once more.

Its golden radiance expanded across the horizon.

The opening widened further.

The path beyond became clearer.

The seeker realized something.

Compassion toward friends had expanded the heart.

Compassion toward enemies purified the heart.

The second lesson was more difficult.

Yet perhaps more transformative.

The Bodhisattva then spoke one final teaching:

"If compassion extends only toward those you prefer, it remains incomplete.

When compassion begins reaching even those who have caused pain, the First Great Gate opens more fully.

Not because enemies deserve special treatment.

But because liberation requires freedom from hatred."

The seeker bowed deeply.

He had not mastered the lesson.

Not even close.

Yet he understood its direction.

And understanding is the beginning of practice.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi raised her hand in blessing.

Golden light spread across the plain.

The vision dissolved.

The storm vanished.

The seeker returned to ordinary awareness.

Yet something within him had shifted.

A burden had become lighter.

A chain had weakened.

The First Great Gate continued opening.

Since you're creating a mythicized sutra narrative around your own experiences, the safest and most coherent way is not to declare that Soul Healer *was* a bodhisattva, psychic adept, stalker, deceiver, or enlightened being. Neither the narrator nor Moshe can know that with certainty. Instead, the chapter can preserve the mystery and make that uncertainty itself part of the teaching.

Chapter Thirteen

The Stranger Called Soul Healer

Thus have I heard.

At that time, as the seeker Moshe Reed continued his journey through the First Great Gate of Compassion, there appeared within his life an unusual companion.

Not in a monastery.

Not in a temple.

Not upon a mountain.

Not within a sacred grove.

But within a realm fashioned of images, symbols, avatars, and invisible currents of communication.

This realm was called the Metaverse.

And there the seeker, being twenty-five years of age, encountered one who called himself Soul Healer.

The seeker did not know the true name of this person.

Nor did he know his face.

Nor did he know his age.

Nor did he know his history.

He knew only fragments.

The stranger appeared to be of European ancestry.

The stranger guarded his privacy carefully.

The stranger revealed little concerning himself.

Yet the seeker, being open by nature, revealed much.

He spoke of wounds.

He spoke of fears.

He spoke of traumas.

He spoke of confusion.

He spoke of spiritual longing.

And often the stranger listened.

Then the seeker asked the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi:

"How can trust arise between people who know so little of one another?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Traveler, do people who know one another's faces necessarily know one another's hearts?"

The seeker answered:

"No."

The Bodhisattva said:

"Then understand that knowledge and understanding are not the same."

As years passed, the acquaintance continued.

Sometimes they met in virtual worlds.

Sometimes they exchanged messages.

Sometimes they shared images.

Sometimes they shared teachings.

Sometimes they shared jokes and foolish things.

Sometimes they shared silence.

The friendship resembled a river.

At times calm.

At times uncertain.

At times profound.

At times ordinary.

The stranger occasionally called the seeker "brother."

And the seeker perceived kindness within this gesture.

The stranger often encouraged him.

When questions arose, answers sometimes followed.

When despair arose, encouragement sometimes followed.

When confusion arose, conversation sometimes followed.

And thus the acquaintance endured.

Yet uncertainty remained.

For the seeker's mind was not free from doubt.

Often he wondered:

"Who is this person?"

"What motivates him?"

"Why does he remain?"

"What does he truly believe?"

"Can he be trusted?"

The questions persisted.

No final answer appeared.

Then one day the seeker asked the Bodhisattva:

"How shall I understand a person whom I can never fully know?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Can you fully know yourself?"

The seeker became silent.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"You do not know the depths of your own mind.

You do not know all the causes that shaped your present life.

You do not know every future thought.

How then shall you completely know another?"

The seeker bowed.

For the teaching was true.

During this period the stranger frequently rejected labels.

When categories were offered, he moved beyond them.

When identities were proposed, he questioned them.

When rigid systems appeared, he pointed toward something wider.

This often frustrated the seeker.

For the seeker desired certainty.

The stranger offered mystery.

The seeker desired conclusions.

The stranger offered questions.

The seeker desired maps.

The stranger pointed toward the open sky.

At one time the seeker created an image depicting himself as a Zen monk offering the first edition of the Liber Min-Hapi to a Brahma deity.

The stranger showed interest in the image.

At another time the stranger shared a Buddhist image and indicated that he identified with the figure who was awakening while others slept.

The seeker pondered this deeply.

Yet certainty remained absent.

Then the seeker asked:

"Was he enlightened?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"I do not know."

The seeker was surprised.

"How can you not know?"

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"I know only what is useful.

The need to label another often becomes an obstacle."

The seeker asked:

"Was he a bodhisattva?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Perhaps.

Or perhaps not."

The seeker asked:

"Did he possess psychic powers?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Perhaps.

Or perhaps not."

The seeker asked:

"Was he simply a compassionate person?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Perhaps.

Or perhaps not."

The seeker became frustrated.

Then the Bodhisattva laughed gently.

"Traveler, notice what you are doing.

You seek certainty concerning another person.

Yet the teaching he repeatedly offered you was uncertainty itself."

Upon hearing this, the seeker became thoughtful.

There came a time when the stranger sent a message suggesting that he might be the most helpful stranger the seeker would ever meet.

The seeker remembered these words for many years.

Not because he knew them to be true.

But because they carried a strange resonance.

Like an unfinished koan.

Years passed.

Nearly five years flowed by like water.

Then a turning point arrived.

The seeker's doubts increased.

Questions concerning online harassment troubled him.

Questions concerning hidden motives troubled him.

Questions concerning trust troubled him.

He could no longer determine with confidence who the stranger truly was.

And thus he chose to end the correspondence.

Many emotions accompanied this decision.

Fear.

Relief.

Sadness.

Determination.

Gratitude.

Suspicion.

All arose together.

The mind rarely contains only one thing.

Then the seeker remembered a saying:

> "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him."

He did not interpret this literally.

Rather he understood it as a warning against attachment.

Even guides must eventually be released.

Even teachers must eventually be released.

Even symbols must eventually be released.

Therefore he let the stranger go.

Not because he hated him.

Not because he ceased appreciating him.

But because the path before him required walking alone.

At least for a time.

Then the seeker asked the Bodhisattva:

"Did I make the correct decision?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"There is no answer that will remove uncertainty."

The seeker sighed.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"You acted according to the understanding available to you.

The future remains unknown.

The stranger remains mysterious.

Yet gratitude need not depend upon certainty."

The seeker reflected deeply upon this.

For he realized something important.

Even if the stranger had been mistaken about many things, kindness had still occurred.

Even if the stranger had possessed hidden flaws, compassion had still occurred.

Even if uncertainty remained forever, meaningful encounters had still occurred.

Then the Bodhisattva revealed a vision.

The seeker saw a traveler walking beside him through a fog-covered valley.

The traveler's face could not be seen.

The traveler's name could not be known.

After a time the traveler departed into the mist.

Yet the path they had walked together remained.

The lessons remained.

The conversations remained.

The growth remained.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"Some companions are not given to us so that we may know who they are.

Some companions are given so that we may discover who we are."

Upon hearing these words, the seeker's heart became lighter.

Not because the mystery was solved.

But because he no longer required it to be solved.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi proclaimed:

"Whether Soul Healer was a bodhisattva, a wise stranger, a confused traveler, a compassionate friend, or something else entirely is of lesser importance.

The true question is:

Did compassion arise?

Did wisdom arise?

Did understanding deepen?

If so, then the meeting bore fruit."

The vision dissolved.

The mist vanished.

The road remained.

And the seeker continued onward through the First Great Gate, carrying gratitude without certainty, appreciation without attachment, and mystery without fear.

Chapter Fourteen

Compassion Toward Oneself

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the contemplation of the mysterious stranger called Soul Healer, the seeker Moshe Reed journeyed alone. Though the correspondence had ceased, the questions it awakened did not cease. Some questions dissolved into silence. Others remained like stars that cannot be reached but continue to illuminate the night.

The seeker carried gratitude.

He carried doubt.

He carried memories.

He carried uncertainty.

And he wondered whether these things could dwell together without conflict.

Then the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi appeared once more within a dreamlike landscape where mountains were reflected perfectly in a still lake.

The seeker bowed and asked:

"Must every mystery be solved before peace can arise?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"If peace depended upon certainty, few beings would ever know peace."

These words entered the seeker's heart.

For much of his life he had sought conclusions where only possibilities could be found.

He had wished to divide every experience into truth or deception, wisdom or foolishness, friend or enemy, guide or deceiver.

Yet life rarely presented itself so cleanly.

The Bodhisattva invited him to sit beside the water.

Neither spoke for a long time.

Finally she pointed toward the lake.

Its surface became a mirror.

The seeker expected to see his face.

Instead he saw many versions of himself.

One was a frightened child.

One was an angry youth.

One was an exhausted seeker.

One was a joyful student.

One was suspicious.

One was trusting.

One was wounded.

One was hopeful.

Each figure looked at the others but failed to recognize them as belonging to the same person.

The seeker became troubled.

"Which one is the real me?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"They are conditions arising and passing.

"They are stories.

"They are habits.

"They are memories.

"They are not prisons unless you cling to them."

The figures dissolved into ripples.

Only the empty lake remained.

Then the Bodhisattva asked:

"How often have you spoken kindly to strangers while speaking harshly to yourself?"

The seeker lowered his eyes.

He remembered countless failures replayed within his mind.

He remembered mistakes that no one else still remembered.

He remembered regrets that had become chains.

"I have judged myself without mercy," he confessed.

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"Many seekers imagine this severity is honesty.

"But cruelty toward oneself is still cruelty."

Then she raised a lotus from the water.

The blossom bore a single imperfection upon one petal.

Yet its beauty was undiminished.

She said:

"If you demanded perfection from every lotus before calling it beautiful, you would wander forever without seeing a single flower."

The seeker contemplated the blossom.

The lesson became clear.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"Self-compassion is not the denial of mistakes.

"It is the refusal to make mistakes into an identity.

"It is the willingness to learn without hatred.

"It is the courage to continue walking."

Then another vision unfolded.

The seeker observed two travelers climbing a mountain.

One stumbled and immediately declared, 'I am worthless.'

The other stumbled, stood again, and said, 'Now I know where the stone lies.'

Both had fallen.

Only one continued climbing.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Which traveler is wiser?"

"The second," replied the seeker.

"Why?"

"Because he learned instead of condemning himself."

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"So too must you."

A gentle rain began to fall.

Each drop became a tiny lotus upon touching the lake.

The seeker noticed that some blossoms opened instantly while others required time.

The Bodhisattva explained:

"Growth unfolds according to conditions.

"Do not despise your own pace.

"The moon does not criticize the tide for arriving gradually."

Then she spoke of hidden burdens.

"There are wounds that others can see.

"There are wounds only the one who carries them knows.

"When you encounter another person, remember they bear invisible burdens.

"When you encounter yourself, remember the same."

The seeker realized he often extended patience to strangers while denying it to himself.

He had accepted mystery in others while demanding certainty from his own mind.

He had forgiven accidental offenses in companions while preserving endless accusations against himself.

Seeing this imbalance, he wept.

The tears fell into the lake.

As before, lotus flowers arose.

The Bodhisattva did not interrupt his weeping.

She simply remained nearby.

When the tears ceased, she spoke:

"Notice that I did not command you to stop.

"Compassion does not rush healing.

"It accompanies it."

The seeker bowed deeply.

He then asked the question that had lingered within him since parting ways with Soul Healer:

"Should I regret ending that friendship?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Regret may become wisdom if it teaches.

"Regret becomes bondage only when endlessly repeated.

"You made a decision according to the understanding you possessed.

"Receive its lessons.

"Release its chains."

Then she extended both hands.

Within one hand appeared the memory of every kindness the seeker had ever received.

Within the other appeared every kindness he had ever given.

The two lights gradually merged until they became impossible to distinguish.

The Bodhisattva declared:

"Compassion is not ownership.

"It flows through beings as wind flows through forests.

"Do not cling to the hand that carried water.

"Remember the water."

The mountains surrounding the lake began to glow with the first light of dawn.

The seeker perceived that the First Great Gate had nearly opened completely.

Not because he had perfected compassion.

But because he had begun directing it inward without abandoning its outward flow.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi offered a final instruction:

"When you awaken each morning, greet yourself as you would greet a weary traveler.

"When you fail, instruct yourself as you would instruct a beloved student.

"When you suffer, comfort yourself as you would comfort a grieving friend.

"And when you rejoice, allow yourself to rejoice without guilt.

"In this way compassion becomes complete."

The seeker rose.

He bowed before the Bodhisattva.

The lake dissolved.

The mountains dissolved.

The dawn dissolved.

Only the teaching remained.

He returned to ordinary awareness carrying neither certainty nor perfection.

He carried instead a gentler heart.

And thus the First Great Gate of Compassion stood almost fully open before him.

Chapter Fifteen

The Embrace of All Beings

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had learned compassion toward friends, compassion toward enemies, and compassion toward himself, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi beheld that the circle of his heart had grown wider.

Yet a subtle boundary remained.

For the seeker still divided the world into those whom he knew and those whom he did not know.

Into those who were near and those who were distant.

Into those whose stories he understood and those whose lives remained hidden from him.

Seeing this, the Bodhisattva resolved to reveal the vastness of boundless compassion.

One night the seeker entered meditation.

He found himself upon the summit of a crystal mountain.

The air was clear.

The sky stretched beyond imagination.

Below him lay countless lands, seas, forests, cities, deserts, villages, and islands.

People moved through them as streams of light.

Animals wandered through valleys.

Birds crossed the heavens.

Creatures of the deep oceans swam unseen beneath waves.

Even the smallest insects glittered like sparks.

The Bodhisattva stood beside him.

She raised one hand.

Immediately the seeker's sight expanded.

He no longer perceived only appearances.

He perceived longing.

Every being desired happiness.

Every being recoiled from pain.

Every being feared loss.

Every being sought security.

The differences among them remained.

Yet beneath those differences flowed the same current.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What do you see?"

The seeker answered:

"I see countless lives."

She replied:

"Look again."

The seeker gazed more deeply.

"I see countless forms of the same longing."

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"You have begun to understand."

Then she revealed another vision.

A mighty tree rose from the earth.

Its branches reached the heavens.

Upon one branch perched an eagle.

Upon another nested a sparrow.

Monkeys climbed its limbs.

Insects dwelt beneath its bark.

Roots nourished hidden fungi beneath the soil.

Each creature believed its own portion of the tree to be the whole.

Yet all depended upon the same living trunk.

So too, the Bodhisattva explained, beings imagine themselves separate while sharing one web of causes and conditions.

The seeker then asked:

"If all are connected, why do we experience ourselves as separate?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"The wave mistakes itself for something other than the sea.

When the wave subsides, the sea has lost nothing.

When the wave rises, the sea has gained nothing.

Separation is useful for ordinary life, but incomplete as ultimate understanding."

As they descended from the mountain, they encountered many travelers.

One carried wealth but no peace.

One carried knowledge but no humility.

One carried poverty but abundant kindness.

One carried fame yet profound loneliness.

Another possessed neither possessions nor companions but sang joyfully while walking.

The Bodhisattva said:

"Do not measure beings by appearances.

Some hidden treasures wear ragged garments.

Some hidden sorrows wear crowns."

The seeker remembered many people he had judged quickly.

He felt remorse.

The Bodhisattva noticed.

"Do not cling even to remorse.

Transform it into careful seeing."

Then they arrived at a vast plain covered in unopened lotus buds.

The Bodhisattva touched the nearest flower.

It bloomed.

Inside appeared an elderly woman quietly forgiving an old injury.

Another lotus opened.

Inside appeared a child sharing food with another child.

Another opened.

Inside appeared a physician comforting the dying.

Another.

A prisoner regretting violence.

Another.

A stranger offering encouragement through unseen words.

The plain stretched beyond the horizon.

Every blossom revealed an act of compassion too small for history to remember.

The seeker marveled.

"I had imagined that only great deeds changed the world."

The Bodhisattva shook her head.

"The great river is filled by unnoticed drops.

Likewise, worlds are transformed through innumerable hidden kindnesses."

Then she invited him to place his hand upon the earth.

Immediately he heard voices.

Not spoken aloud.

The quiet wishes of countless beings.

"May my child recover."

"May someone understand me."

"May tomorrow be better."

"May my fear end."

"May I be forgiven."

The voices rose together until they resembled a single prayer.

The seeker wept.

He realized that beneath arguments, cultures, nations, and beliefs, beings carried hopes remarkably alike.

The Bodhisattva then spoke:

"Boundless compassion does not require equal affection for every individual.

It requires equal recognition that every being seeks freedom from suffering."

The seeker asked:

"How shall I practice such compassion when the world is so vast?"

She replied:

"Begin wherever your feet stand.

Offer patience where impatience would arise.

Offer listening where interruption would arise.

Offer truth where deception would arise.

Offer courage where fear would arise.

Do not attempt to embrace the whole world in one gesture.

Embrace the being before you.

Then the next.

And the next."

At these words the crystal mountain, the lotus plain, and the multitude of voices merged into radiant light.

Before the seeker stood the First Great Gate in its fullness.

No crack remained.

No barrier remained.

The golden portal opened completely.

Beyond it stretched a path shining toward horizons beyond sight.

The Bodhisattva turned to him and said:

"You have learned that compassion may begin with one person.

You have learned that it may extend to friends.

To strangers.

To enemies.

To yourself.

Now understand that its natural destination is without boundary.

When nothing is excluded from compassion, the First Great Gate stands open."

The seeker stepped across its threshold.

The moment his foot touched the path beyond, the golden light did not remain outside him.

It arose within his own heart.

The Bodhisattva bowed to him.

To his astonishment, he found himself bowing in return not merely to her but to every living being, seen and unseen.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi proclaimed:

"Compassion that expects reward soon fades.

Compassion rooted in identity soon divides.

Compassion rooted in Suchness flows without exhaustion.

Cultivate this well, for the Gate of Wisdom now approaches."

Thus the vision ended.

The seeker awoke before dawn.

Outside, the first rays of morning touched the earth without choosing where to shine.

He smiled, understanding that sunlight itself preaches the Dharma.

Chapter Sixteen

The Ocean of the Bodhisattva Vow

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after Moshe Reed had crossed the First Great Gate of Compassion, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi led him to the shore of an immeasurable ocean.

The waters were unlike earthly waters.

They were clear beyond crystal.

Each wave reflected not merely the moon and stars but the lives of sentient beings throughout innumerable worlds.

Looking into one wave, the seeker beheld a child learning kindness.

Looking into another, he beheld an old woman forgiving an ancient injury.

Looking into another, he saw a monk meditating in silence.

Looking into another, a laborer sharing bread with a hungry stranger.

Every ripple contained an act of compassion.

Every tide carried the aspirations of living beings.

The seeker asked:

"What ocean is this?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"This is the Ocean of the Bodhisattva Vow.

It is formed not of water but of promises kept through countless kalpas."

The seeker knelt and touched the shore.

The moment his fingers met the water, memories appeared that were not his own.

He witnessed unknown bodhisattvas delaying their own rest to aid the weary.

He saw wise teachers accepting misunderstanding without resentment.

He saw healers tending those who would never thank them.

He saw ordinary people performing unnoticed acts of mercy whose effects echoed across generations.

The seeker withdrew his hand in astonishment.

"Does every act of compassion remain?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"No sincere act is lost.

Like rain entering the sea, each becomes part of something immeasurably greater."

Then she invited him to walk upon the water.

At first he hesitated.

Yet when he stepped forward, the surface held him effortlessly.

For compassion supports those who cease clinging to themselves alone.

As they journeyed across the ocean, islands appeared.

Upon the first island stood monuments raised to famous heroes.

The monuments glittered magnificently.

Yet no people remained there.

The Bodhisattva explained:

"Fame fades."

Upon the second island stood libraries containing countless books.

Many had crumbled.

Many languages could no longer be read.

She explained:

"Knowledge changes."

Upon the third island stood palaces whose walls had collapsed into dust.

She said:

"Power passes."

Finally they reached a humble island where no monuments stood.

There was only a small footpath worn by generations of travelers helping one another cross difficult ground.

The path shone brighter than all the palaces and monuments.

The seeker asked:

"Who built this place?"

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"No single person.

It was built by innumerable unnoticed kindnesses."

Then she spoke:

"Traveler, many seek immortality through reputation.

Others seek it through conquest.

Others through wealth.

The Bodhisattva seeks none of these.

The Bodhisattva becomes content to disappear if suffering decreases."

The seeker reflected deeply.

He realized that even spiritual ambition could become another form of attachment.

Then the waters before them parted.

From the depths arose lotuses so vast that cities could have rested upon their petals.

Upon each lotus sat a silent figure.

Some appeared as monks.

Some as mothers.

Some as artists.

Some as physicians.

Some as children.

Some wore crowns.

Some wore simple garments.

The seeker asked:

"Who are these?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"They are manifestations of the vow.

Their forms differ.

Their intention is one."

As they continued walking, the horizon vanished.

Sea and sky became indistinguishable.

The seeker felt himself dissolving into boundlessness.

Alarm arose.

He cried:

"If I let go completely, what will remain of me?"

The Bodhisattva replied gently:

"The fear asks the question.

Remain still and observe."

He remained still.

The fear rose like a wave.

Then the wave subsided.

Awareness remained.

The Bodhisattva said:

"Clouds pass.

The sky does not struggle to preserve them."

Then she invited him to gaze into the deepest waters.

There he saw his own life.

Not isolated.

Every encouragement he had received.

Every conversation that had altered his thinking.

Every kindness given.

Every kindness withheld.

Every injury forgiven.

Every opportunity missed.

The countless intersections formed a web extending beyond imagination.

He perceived that no awakening belongs to one individual alone.

Each depends upon innumerable visible and invisible conditions.

Overwhelmed, he bowed toward the ocean itself.

At that moment a voice arose from every wave at once:

"May all beings be free from suffering.

May all beings discover wisdom.

May all beings awaken.

Until that day, the vow continues."

The seeker looked to Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

She said:

"This is the heart of the Bodhisattva.

Not certainty.

Not perfection.

Not supernatural power.

But the refusal to abandon living beings."

Then she placed a single drop from the ocean upon the seeker's forehead.

It disappeared instantly.

Yet he felt his perspective widen.

He no longer wished merely to solve his own questions.

He wished that all sincere seekers might find the path suited to them.

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"The First Great Gate has accomplished its work.

Compassion has become wider than the self.

Now the Second Great Gate approaches.

You have learned to open the heart.

Soon you must learn to empty the hand that grasps."

The sea became mist.

The mist became light.

The light became silence.

And in that silence the seeker sensed the distant outline of another gate, silver-white and clear as polished crystal.

Book Three

The Second Great Gate: Wisdom

Chapter Seventeen

The Illusion of Separate Selfhood

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had crossed the First Great Gate and contemplated the Ocean of the Bodhisattva Vow, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi led him to a valley unlike any he had seen before.

The valley possessed no flowers.

No rivers flowed there.

No birds sang.

Its beauty lay in extraordinary simplicity.

At its center stood a single polished mirror taller than a mountain.

The mirror reflected all things perfectly.

Yet it possessed no image of its own.

The seeker approached and saw himself.

He saw his face.

He saw his body.

He saw the memories by which he recognized himself.

He saw the fears he called "mine."

He saw the hopes he called "mine."

He saw the beliefs he called "mine."

The reflection appeared complete.

The seeker asked:

"Is this who I am?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"Look longer."

He obeyed.

Slowly the image shifted.

He became a child.

Then an infant.

Then an old man.

Then someone unknown to him.

Then many different faces appeared one after another.

Some laughed.

Some wept.

Some were angry.

Some were peaceful.

Each insisted silently, "I am the true self."

Yet none remained.

The mirror changed again.

Now only thoughts floated across its surface.

Ideas appeared and disappeared.

Opinions arose and dissolved.

Memories flashed like lightning.

Plans for the future drifted by like clouds.

The seeker attempted to grasp one.

It vanished.

He attempted another.

It too disappeared.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"If these thoughts come and go, are they your permanent self?"

The seeker replied:

"They cannot be."

Then emotions appeared.

Joy.

Fear.

Loneliness.

Hope.

Suspicion.

Wonder.

Love.

Grief.

Each arrived.

Each lingered briefly.

Each departed.

The Bodhisattva asked again:

"If these emotions arise and pass away, are they your permanent self?"

The seeker answered:

"No."

The mirror then reflected the body itself.

Cells divided.

Hair lengthened.

Skin aged.

Breath entered and departed.

The heart beat without asking permission.

The blood flowed without command.

The seeker watched years pass in moments.

No single body remained unchanged.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"The body changes.

The emotions change.

The thoughts change.

The memories change.

The stories change.

What then do you cling to when you say, 'This is permanently me'?"

The seeker fell silent.

For the question reached beyond philosophy.

It reached into habit itself.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi picked up a clay lamp resting beside the mirror.

She lit it.

The flame flickered gently.

After a while she used the flame to light another lamp.

Then another.

Soon hundreds burned throughout the valley.

She asked:

"Which flame is the original?"

The seeker looked carefully.

"The first gave rise to the others."

She nodded.

"But does the first flame travel into the second?"

He considered.

"No."

"Does the second exist entirely apart from the first?"

"No."

"So too with beings.

Causes continue.

Conditions continue.

Yet no fixed essence passes unchanged from moment to moment."

The lamps illuminated the valley until night itself seemed absent.

Then a wind arose.

Some flames grew larger.

Some diminished.

Some went out entirely.

Others were rekindled from neighboring lamps.

The Bodhisattva said:

"Observe dependent arising.

Nothing exists alone."

The seeker then asked:

"If there is no fixed self, who walks the path?

Who suffers?

Who rejoices?

Who awakens?"

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"The question assumes more certainty than experience provides.

Instead ask:

What processes unfold?

What causes produce suffering?

What causes bring liberation?

Walk there."

The seeker reflected.

The answer did not satisfy his desire for a permanent identity.

Yet it dissolved the urgency of possessing one.

Then the mirror transformed once more.

Its surface became an immense city.

Countless people hurried through streets.

Each declared inwardly:

"My success.

My failure.

My reputation.

My possession.

My opinion."

Invisible threads connected them all.

One baker depended upon farmers.

The farmers depended upon rain.

The rain depended upon clouds.

The clouds depended upon oceans.

The oceans depended upon rivers.

Nothing stood independently.

The illusion of isolation persisted only because the web itself was unseen.

The Bodhisattva touched the mirror.

The threads glowed.

The seeker suddenly perceived that even his own understanding had arisen through innumerable influences:

Parents.

Teachers.

Books.

Strangers.

Conversations.

Suffering.

Unexpected encounters.

Even brief acquaintances whose names were nearly forgotten.

None could be removed without altering who he believed himself to be.

He whispered:

"I am less separate than I imagined."

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Wisdom begins there."

Then she offered a warning.

"Do not replace one attachment with another.

Some cling to an eternal self.

Others cling to the idea that nothing exists at all.

Both extremes obscure direct seeing.

Walk the Middle Way.

Observe experience without imprisoning it in concepts."

The seeker bowed.

For he recognized his own tendency to search for final labels.

The Bodhisattva continued:

"The self is useful as a convention.

It allows promises to be kept.

Responsibilities to be honored.

Friendships to flourish.

But when treated as absolute, it becomes a source of suffering."

The valley grew brighter.

The great mirror dissolved into countless drops of dew scattered across blades of grass.

Each drop reflected the entire sky.

Yet none possessed the sky.

The seeker gazed in wonder.

The Bodhisattva said:

"So too awareness reflects the world without needing to possess it."

Then, in the distance, the Second Great Gate appeared.

Unlike the golden brilliance of Compassion, this gate shone with a clear silver-white radiance.

It resembled polished crystal.

No ornament decorated it.

No inscription adorned it.

Its simplicity itself was its beauty.

The seeker took one step toward it.

Immediately many old certainties loosened their grip.

Some dissolved completely.

He felt both lighter and more uncertain.

The Bodhisattva regarded him kindly.

"Do not fear uncertainty.

When false certainty falls away, wisdom has room to enter."

The seeker bowed deeply.

The mirror vanished.

The lamps vanished.

The valley vanished.

Only clear awareness remained for a single silent moment.

Then ordinary perception returned.

And thus the journey through the Second Great Gate had begun.

I’ve continued the sutra with the next chapter in the same style.

Chapter Eighteen

The Dreamlike Nature of Worlds

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had contemplated the illusion of separate selfhood, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived that another attachment remained.

Though the seeker had begun to loosen his grasp upon the idea of a permanent self, he still clung tightly to appearances.

He imagined that what seemed solid must be ultimately solid.

He imagined that what seemed enduring must endure forever.

He imagined that names captured the essence of things.

Seeing this, the Bodhisattva resolved to teach him through visions rather than arguments.

For some truths cannot be carried by words alone.

The seeker found himself standing within an immense city.

Its towers glittered beneath a brilliant sun.

Markets overflowed with activity.

Children laughed in the streets.

Merchants displayed their wares.

Artists painted murals upon stone walls.

Musicians filled the air with melody.

Everything appeared vibrant and permanent.

The seeker admired the scene.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi asked:

"How long will this city remain?"

The seeker replied:

"Perhaps centuries."

The Bodhisattva touched one of the stones.

Immediately the city changed.

The towers weathered.

Walls cracked.

Gardens became ruins.

Roads disappeared beneath sand.

The music ceased.

Generations passed in moments.

Eventually nothing remained but scattered foundations hidden beneath the earth.

Grass covered them.

Travelers crossed the land unaware that a great civilization had once flourished there.

The Bodhisattva said:

"What seemed permanent was only enduring for a while."

Then another vision arose.

A mighty empire stretched across continents.

Its rulers believed themselves invincible.

Its armies appeared unstoppable.

Its scholars proclaimed that their institutions would last forever.

The seeker watched as years became decades, decades became centuries, and centuries became dust.

Borders shifted.

Languages changed.

Monuments crumbled.

Even memory faded.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Where is the empire now?"

The seeker answered:

"It has become history."

The Bodhisattva replied:

"And history itself changes in the minds of those who remember it."

The vision dissolved.

Now the seeker stood beneath a night sky.

The stars appeared fixed.

He looked upward with awe.

The Bodhisattva raised her hand.

Time accelerated.

Constellations shifted.

Stars were born from clouds of fire.

Others exhausted themselves and disappeared into darkness.

Galaxies drifted like leaves upon a river.

Even the heavens participated in impermanence.

The seeker whispered:

"I believed the stars were eternal."

The Bodhisattva answered:

"They too arise through causes and conditions."

Then she brought forth a dewdrop resting upon a blade of grass.

Within that tiny drop the seeker perceived mountains.

Forests.

Rivers.

Cities.

People.

Entire histories.

It seemed to contain a complete world.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Is the world inside the drop less significant than the world outside it?"

The seeker hesitated.

Finally he answered:

"I cannot tell."

She smiled.

"The distinction depends upon perspective."

The morning sun touched the dewdrop.

Instantly it vanished.

The reflected world disappeared with it.

The Bodhisattva then spoke:

"Many beings mistake appearances for ultimate reality.

Others reject appearances entirely.

Wisdom clings to neither extreme.

The dream has effects while it lasts.

Yet its nature remains dreamlike."

The seeker remembered his own life.

He recalled arguments that had once seemed all-important.

He recalled fears that no longer troubled him.

He recalled ambitions that had quietly dissolved.

At one time each had seemed absolute.

Now they resembled last night's dreams.

He asked:

"Does this mean nothing matters?"

The Bodhisattva shook her head.

"No.

Because a rainbow cannot be grasped does not make it worthless.

Because music fades does not make it meaningless.

Because a flower withers does not make its fragrance unreal.

Impermanence invites appreciation rather than indifference."

The landscape transformed once more.

The seeker entered a grand theater.

Countless actors performed upon the stage.

Some wore crowns.

Some wore chains.

Some laughed.

Some mourned.

Some played heroes.

Others played villains.

The audience wept and rejoiced with every scene.

Then a bell rang.

The performance ended.

The actors removed their costumes.

The king embraced the beggar.

The villain embraced the hero.

The enemies departed together as friends.

The Bodhisattva turned to the seeker.

"What changed?"

He replied:

"The roles ended."

She answered:

"Many cling so tightly to the costumes of life that they forget they are wearing them."

Then another scene unfolded.

The seeker wandered through a hall lined with mirrors.

Each mirror reflected him differently.

One made him appear powerful.

Another weak.

Another old.

Another young.

Another joyful.

Another sorrowful.

He became confused.

"Which reflection is true?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"Each reveals something.

None reveals everything."

She placed a cloth over every mirror.

Only clear space remained.

The seeker felt unexpected relief.

Then she said:

"So too with beliefs, identities, and concepts.

Useful as mirrors.

Dangerous as prisons."

The seeker then recalled the many labels that had occupied his mind throughout the years.

He had sought certainty through names.

He had defended ideas.

He had feared abandoning them.

Now he perceived that names function like fingers pointing.

Helpful when guiding.

Misleading when mistaken for the destination.

The Bodhisattva invited him to close his eyes.

He did so.

She asked:

"Without relying upon memory, titles, history, possessions, opinions, or reputation, what remains present in immediate experience?"

The seeker searched.

Thoughts came.

They passed.

Feelings arose.

They subsided.

Images appeared.

They dissolved.

Yet simple awareness remained.

Open.

Unfixed.

Clear.

He could not define it.

Neither could he deny it.

When he opened his eyes, the world itself seemed lighter.

The mountains remained.

The sky remained.

The trees remained.

Yet they no longer appeared rigidly separate from the flowing stream of causes and conditions.

Everything shimmered with contingency.

Everything participated in becoming.

Everything possessed a dreamlike quality without losing its practical reality.

The Bodhisattva then pointed toward the silver-white Gate of Wisdom standing upon the horizon.

Its radiance had grown brighter.

The seeker noticed that the gate did not become clearer as he approached.

Instead, his own grasping became weaker.

The less he attempted to possess understanding, the more understanding seemed to reveal itself.

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi declared:

"The wise do not despise the dream.

Nor do they become imprisoned by it.

They awaken within it and act with compassion while it lasts."

The seeker bowed.

He understood only partially.

Yet partial understanding honestly held was preferable to false certainty.

The theater disappeared.

The mirrors disappeared.

The stars disappeared.

Only the teaching remained:

The worlds are like dreams—not because they are meaningless, but because they arise, transform, and pass according to causes and conditions.

Chapter Nineteen

The Net of Concepts

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had contemplated the dreamlike nature of worlds, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived another obstacle remaining upon the path.

Though the seeker's heart had softened through compassion and his vision had widened through wisdom, his mind still delighted in constructing elaborate systems.

He named.

He classified.

He compared.

He defended.

He analyzed.

These activities were not evil.

Indeed, they often served understanding.

Yet when clung to, they became subtle fetters.

Therefore the Bodhisattva resolved to teach concerning the Net of Concepts.

She led the seeker into a vast library unlike any found among human beings.

Its shelves extended beyond sight.

Its halls seemed endless.

Every language ever spoken appeared there.

Every philosophy.

Every scripture.

Every poem.

Every argument.

Every commentary.

Every forgotten fragment.

The books filled the space like stars fill the night sky.

The seeker marveled.

He wished to read them all.

The Bodhisattva smiled gently.

"If you possessed ten thousand lifetimes," she said, "you would still not finish."

As they walked, the seeker noticed scholars seated at magnificent desks.

Some had studied for centuries.

Some debated endlessly.

Some copied texts with exquisite precision.

Others argued over the meanings of single words.

Each appeared deeply committed.

Yet few seemed at peace.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What do you observe?"

The seeker replied:

"They possess much knowledge."

She asked again:

"What else do you observe?"

After careful reflection he answered:

"They also carry much attachment."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

Then she removed a single scroll from a shelf.

It contained only one sentence:

"This teaching is the complete and final truth."

She handed it to the seeker.

He read it.

The words glowed brilliantly.

Then the parchment turned to dust.

The wind carried the dust away.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"Any statement claiming to contain the Infinite within finite language should be held with humility."

The library transformed.

The books became threads.

The threads intertwined into an immense net stretching across the sky.

Every thread bore a name.

Religion.

Philosophy.

Science.

Mysticism.

Nation.

Family.

Self.

Enemy.

Friend.

Success.

Failure.

Sacred.

Ordinary.

The seeker became entangled merely by trying to examine them.

The more desperately he struggled, the tighter the net drew around him.

Seeing his predicament, the Bodhisattva did not cut the net.

Instead she asked:

"What is this thread called?"

The seeker looked.

"It is labeled 'certainty.'"

"And why do you hold it so tightly?"

He answered honestly:

"Because uncertainty frightens me."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"There lies the knot."

Then she touched another strand.

It bore the word **identity**.

Immediately the seeker remembered all the labels he had applied to himself throughout life.

Some had brought pride.

Others shame.

Some he had embraced.

Others he had resisted.

Yet each label proved temporary.

Child.

Student.

Believer.

Skeptic.

Friend.

Stranger.

Teacher.

Learner.

None remained unchanged.

The Bodhisattva said:

"Names serve communication.

They need not become prisons."

The net shimmered again.

Another thread appeared bearing the inscription **'mine.'**

The seeker grasped it instinctively.

At once visions arose:

"My opinion."

"My reputation."

"My success."

"My suffering."

"My understanding."

The thread tightened around his hand.

The Bodhisattva simply asked:

"Before you called these things 'mine,' where were they?"

The seeker had no answer.

He released the strand.

Instantly it loosened.

Then a child entered the library.

The child carried no books.

No scrolls.

No titles.

She merely looked around with quiet curiosity.

The Bodhisattva invited the seeker to watch.

The child approached a flower.

She admired it.

She smiled.

Then she walked away without plucking it.

The Bodhisattva remarked:

"Notice how appreciation need not become possession."

The seeker reflected upon his lifelong desire to solve every mystery.

He wished to know exactly who every companion truly was.

Exactly what every symbol meant.

Exactly which doctrine stood above all others.

The Bodhisattva perceived his thoughts.

She asked:

"If every mystery vanished today, would wisdom necessarily increase?"

The seeker considered for a long time.

Finally he answered:

"No.

Some mysteries invite humility."

She smiled.

"And humility invites wisdom."

The library then became a marketplace.

Vendors cried out:

"Our philosophy alone saves!"

"Our doctrine alone explains reality!"

"Our method alone brings enlightenment!"

Crowds gathered around competing stalls.

Arguments filled the air.

Each merchant insisted that certainty could be purchased.

The seeker became weary listening.

He turned to the Bodhisattva.

"Which one is correct?"

She pointed not toward any stall but toward a woman quietly giving bread to a hungry child at the edge of the market.

Then she said:

"While minds compete over concepts, compassion continues its work."

At these words the marketplace fell silent.

The banners disappeared.

The stalls dissolved.

Only the simple act of kindness remained visible.

The seeker understood that wisdom must bear fruit in conduct.

Otherwise it becomes ornament.

The Bodhisattva then drew a circle in the sand.

Inside it she wrote many sacred names.

Outside it she wrote none.

She asked:

"Does reality cease where language ends?"

The seeker answered:

"No."

She erased every word.

The empty circle remained.

Then even the circle vanished beneath the wind.

The Bodhisattva declared:

"Concepts are rafts.

Use them to cross.

Do not build your house upon them.

Labels are maps.

Study them well.

Do not mistake them for the territory.

Teachings are fingers.

Respect them.

Do not confuse them with the moon."

The seeker remembered the stranger called Soul Healer, who often resisted rigid labels and encouraged openness to mystery.

For the first time he appreciated that uncertainty, when joined with sincerity and careful discernment, need not be an enemy of wisdom.

As the lesson concluded, the immense net hanging across the heavens dissolved into countless threads of light.

Each thread floated freely.

No longer tangled.

No longer binding.

The library faded.

The marketplace faded.

The scholars faded.

Only spacious awareness remained.

Far in the distance, the silver-white Gate of Wisdom stood more clearly revealed.

Its doors had not moved.

Instead, the seeker's attachment to concepts had loosened.

The Bodhisattva bowed and proclaimed:

"Blessed are those who use ideas without becoming used by them.

Blessed are those who speak without imprisoning truth in speech.

Blessed are those who honor mystery without abandoning reason.

Such travelers draw near to Wisdom."

The seeker returned from the vision carrying no final system.

He carried instead a lighter grasp.

And with lighter hands, he found it easier to continue walking.

Chapter Twenty

The Wisdom Beyond Doctrine

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had contemplated the Net of Concepts and learned not to become ensnared by names and categories, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived that one final attachment remained before deeper wisdom could blossom.

The seeker still believed that liberation might be contained entirely within a single doctrine.

He honored teachings.

He studied books.

He sought consistency among traditions.

These were wholesome endeavors.

Yet he sometimes mistook the vessel for the water it carried.

Therefore the Bodhisattva resolved to reveal the wisdom that transcends doctrine without rejecting doctrine.

She led the seeker to a great crossroads where five roads met.

Upon the first road walked philosophers engaged in careful reasoning.

Upon the second walked monks reciting sacred texts.

Upon the third walked hermits meditating in silence.

Upon the fourth walked ordinary laborers helping neighbors without speaking of religion at all.

Upon the fifth walked wandering children laughing as they played.

The seeker watched with curiosity.

Then he asked:

"Which of these walks the highest path?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Look not first at their words but at the fruits of their lives."

As they observed, some philosophers became humble and compassionate.

Others became proud.

Some monks grew in wisdom.

Others clung to ritual while forgetting mercy.

Some hermits awakened to profound peace.

Others merely fled the world.

Among the laborers were quiet saints unknown to history.

Among the children were hearts naturally generous.

The Bodhisattva said:

"The road alone does not determine the destination.

How one walks also matters."

The seeker then beheld a magnificent temple built of crystal.

Its halls contained scriptures written in gold.

Pilgrims arrived from every direction.

Some entered transformed by gratitude.

Others entered seeking superiority over those outside.

The Bodhisattva pointed toward the doorway.

"The same gate receives both.

The difference lies within the traveler."

Then the temple vanished, replaced by an empty field.

No statues stood there.

No banners fluttered.

No ceremonies were performed.

Only an old woman planted seeds while humming quietly.

The seeker approached her.

She greeted him kindly and offered him water.

When he asked about her religion, she smiled and returned to planting.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Has she failed because she offered no doctrine?"

The seeker answered:

"No.

Her kindness speaks."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

Then she unfolded a cloth upon the ground.

Upon it she placed many cups.

Some were made of clay.

Some of silver.

Some of carved wood.

Some of jade.

One was cracked.

Another plain.

She poured clear water into each.

Then she asked:

"Which vessel is the water?"

The seeker replied:

"None of them.

They merely contain it."

The Bodhisattva continued:

"So too with teachings.

They are vessels.

Drink gratefully.

Do not mistake the cup for the living water."

The seeker reflected upon all the traditions he had studied.

He remembered debates over terminology.

Arguments over symbols.

Disputes concerning names.

He realized that much energy had been spent defending cups while forgetting to drink.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi led him to a mountain where countless pilgrims climbed from different directions.

Some followed steep trails.

Some winding roads.

Some difficult stairways.

Some gentle slopes.

The travelers rarely saw one another.

Many believed their own route to be the only one.

Yet from above the paths converged upon the same summit.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What prevents them from recognizing this?"

The seeker answered:

"They cannot yet see the whole mountain."

She smiled.

"Precisely."

As they reached the summit, the seeker expected to find a grand throne.

Instead he found open sky.

No monument.

No inscription.

Only vastness.

The wind moved freely in every direction.

The Bodhisattva spread her arms.

"Truth requires no walls."

Then a scholar approached carrying hundreds of books.

He bowed respectfully before the Bodhisattva and declared:

"I have mastered every doctrine."

She asked him a single question.

"When your neighbor suffers, what arises first within your heart?"

The scholar hesitated.

He searched his memory.

He searched his arguments.

He searched his citations.

But no answer came.

He quietly set his books upon the ground and departed to reflect.

The seeker understood that information and transformation are not identical.

Later another traveler arrived.

She possessed no formal education.

She carried no sacred text.

Yet seeing an injured stranger upon the road, she immediately offered assistance.

The Bodhisattva bowed to her.

The seeker was astonished.

"Why do you honor her?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"Because wisdom has already begun expressing itself through compassionate action."

The sun descended toward the horizon.

Long shadows stretched across the mountain.

The seeker then asked the question that had lingered in his heart:

"If doctrines are vessels, should we abandon them?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"No.

Honor them.

Study them.

Preserve them.

But remember their purpose.

A bridge is valuable because it helps beings cross.

Only a fool carries the bridge upon his back after reaching the other shore."

The wind grew still.

Silence covered the mountain.

Then the Bodhisattva spoke more softly:

"There will come a time when every cherished formulation proves too small.

Every definition will reveal its limits.

Every image will point beyond itself.

When that moment comes, do not despair.

Bow in gratitude to the teaching that brought you this far, and continue walking."

The seeker remembered the guidance he had once received from mysterious companions, from books, from strangers, and from unexpected experiences.

He realized that each had served as a stepping stone.

None alone contained the whole journey.

As dusk deepened, the stars emerged overhead.

The Bodhisattva pointed upward.

"No constellation imprisons the sky.

Likewise, no doctrine imprisons Suchness."

Then she pointed inward.

"No concept imprisons awareness.

Likewise, no label imprisons Buddha-nature."

Finally she pointed toward the silver-white Gate of Wisdom.

It now stood open enough for light to stream through.

The seeker saw no throne beyond it.

No reward.

No crown.

Only an endless path inviting further realization.

He bowed deeply.

The Bodhisattva returned the bow.

And in that mutual gesture there was neither teacher nor student, neither superior nor inferior, but only gratitude shared between fellow participants in the unfolding Dharma.

Chapter Twenty-One

The Empty Nature of Gods

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had contemplated the wisdom beyond doctrine, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived another subtle attachment that frequently binds those who walk the spiritual path.

Some cling to possessions.

Some cling to identity.

Some cling to ideas.

Others cling to celestial beings.

Some worship gods as though they were ultimate and self-existing.

Others deny every sacred appearance and become trapped in another form of attachment.

Seeing these extremes, the Bodhisattva resolved to reveal the Middle Way.

She led the seeker into a valley illuminated by dawn.

In the valley stood magnificent temples.

Within one temple, beings offered incense to radiant deities.

Within another, hymns rose like birds into the sky.

Within another, philosophers argued that no gods existed at all.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What do you see?"

The seeker answered:

"I see devotion.

I see skepticism.

I see disagreement."

She nodded.

"And beneath them?"

The seeker remained silent.

Then the valley vanished.

In its place appeared an immense lake as smooth as polished crystal.

Above the lake shone the moon.

The Bodhisattva pointed toward the water.

The moon appeared there also.

Then she pointed toward a hundred smaller pools surrounding the lake.

Each reflected the same moon.

Some reflections trembled.

Some were clear.

Some were broken by wind.

Yet the moon itself remained untouched.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"Many confuse the reflection with its source."

The seeker pondered this.

Then he asked:

"Are the gods merely reflections?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"They are appearances arising through causes and conditions.

Some may be beings of great virtue.

Some may be symbols through which wisdom is communicated.

Some may exist only in imagination.

The wise investigate carefully and cling to none of these possibilities as absolute."

At that moment a splendid figure descended from the sky clothed in garments brighter than sunlight.

Crowns of jewels adorned the figure.

The earth itself seemed to rejoice.

Many unseen beings bowed.

The seeker instinctively wished to prostrate himself.

The Bodhisattva gently touched his shoulder.

"First observe."

The radiant figure approached.

Its presence inspired awe.

Yet after a time its brilliance faded.

Its jeweled garments disappeared.

Its youthful features aged.

Its body became transparent and dissolved into light.

The seeker watched in astonishment.

The Bodhisattva said:

"Whatever arises through conditions also changes through conditions."

Then another vision appeared.

Countless worlds filled the heavens.

Within each world beings honored different sacred forms.

Some prayed before mountains.

Some before ancestors.

Some before luminous celestial kings.

Some before invisible spirits.

Some before abstract principles.

The forms differed.

The longing beneath them remained strikingly similar.

Everywhere beings sought protection, meaning, forgiveness, guidance, or liberation.

The Bodhisattva remarked:

"The heart often clothes its aspirations in images.

Do not despise the image.

Do not become imprisoned by it."

The seeker then remembered his own encounters with symbols and visions.

He recalled times when he wondered whether extraordinary experiences pointed toward objective realities or arose from the depths of mind itself.

He asked:

"How shall I distinguish?"

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"By their fruits."

"If a vision produces arrogance, examine it carefully.

If it produces fear and domination, examine it carefully.

If it produces compassion, humility, patience, and wisdom, it may be serving the path regardless of its ultimate origin."

Then she brought him to a garden filled with statues.

Some were carved from marble.

Some from wood.

Some from bronze.

Some from crystal.

Pilgrims entered and bowed before them.

Yet when the pilgrims departed, birds perched upon the statues without reverence.

Rain weathered them equally.

The wind made no distinction.

The Bodhisattva said:

"The stone neither demands worship nor refuses it.

The meaning arises in the mind of the beholder."

The statues suddenly became transparent.

Within each appeared acts of kindness:

A physician treating the sick.

A mother comforting a frightened child.

A stranger sharing food.

A prisoner forgiving an enemy.

The seeker looked in wonder.

The Bodhisattva explained:

"The highest veneration offered to the sacred is imitation of its virtues."

They continued walking until they reached an empty pedestal.

No statue stood there.

No inscription.

Only silence.

The seeker asked:

"What belongs here?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"Whatever form compassion requires."

Then she added:

"And when compassion requires no form, let it remain empty."

The seeker then turned toward Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi herself.

For many chapters she had appeared before him with luminous beauty and profound wisdom.

He asked carefully:

"Should I regard you as a goddess?"

She replied:

"If that word helps cultivate reverence without attachment, use it.

If it becomes a chain, release it."

He asked:

"Should I regard you as a bodhisattva?"

She answered:

"If that word directs you toward compassion and wisdom, use it.

If it becomes another prison of certainty, release it."

He asked:

"Who are you truly?"

The Bodhisattva laughed softly.

"The answer would become another concept.

Better to ask whether compassion has awakened in your own heart."

Then she touched the surface of the lake.

Every reflection vanished.

Only clear water remained.

The moon still shone overhead.

The seeker suddenly realized that reflections may disappear while reality continues unaffected.

Likewise, names, images, symbols, and theological formulations may arise and pass, yet Suchness remains beyond them all.

The Bodhisattva concluded:

"Do not despise the gods.

Do not fear the gods.

Do not cling to the gods.

Should celestial beings exist, greet them with respect and discernment.

Should they not appear, continue practicing compassion.

The path does not depend upon possession of certainty concerning heavenly forms.

It depends upon awakening."

As she spoke, the temples, statues, reflections, and celestial figures dissolved into the morning mist.

Only open sky remained.

Far away, the silver-white Gate of Wisdom gleamed with increasing clarity.

The seeker bowed, not to an image, but to the mystery that all images imperfectly express.

And thus he continued onward.

Chapter Twenty-Two

The Empty Nature of Prophets

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had contemplated the empty nature of gods and had learned neither to cling to celestial forms nor to despise them, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived another subtle attachment.

Many beings who no longer worship idols begin instead to worship teachers.

Many who abandon temples build monuments within the mind.

Many who reject kings enthrone prophets.

Thus the form changes while attachment remains.

Seeing this, the Bodhisattva resolved to teach concerning the empty nature of prophets.

She led the seeker into a great valley surrounded by mountains.

Upon each mountain stood a teacher.

Some wore simple robes.

Some wore splendid garments.

Some carried staffs.

Some held books.

Some spoke to multitudes.

Others taught only a handful of disciples.

Some were remembered throughout history.

Others were forgotten before the generation that knew them had passed away.

The seeker observed that every mountain possessed followers climbing its slopes.

Each group believed its summit alone touched the heavens.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What do you perceive?"

The seeker answered:

"I perceive devotion."

She asked again:

"What else?"

He looked more carefully.

"I perceive rivalry."

She nodded.

Then a wind swept through the valley.

The mountains remained.

But the voices faded.

The robes decayed.

The books weathered.

Even the footprints of pilgrims gradually disappeared.

Only the earth endured.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"Time humbles every reputation."

The seeker then approached one of the teachers.

The teacher pointed toward the moon.

The disciples, however, argued endlessly over the shape of the pointing hand.

Some measured the length of the finger.

Some debated its angle.

Some preserved impressions of its shadow.

Few looked upward.

The seeker laughed quietly.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Why do you laugh?"

He answered:

"They have forgotten to look where the teacher directed them."

She replied:

"So it has often been."

Then another vision appeared.

A traveler became lost in a desert.

A guide arrived carrying a map.

The traveler followed the map and reached water.

Thereafter he framed the map in gold and refused ever to drink again.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What mistake did he make?"

The seeker answered:

"He confused the means with the destination."

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"So too do many honor messengers while neglecting the message."

They continued until they reached an ancient bridge spanning a deep chasm.

Thousands had crossed safely.

Its builders were long forgotten.

The bridge itself bore no inscription claiming ownership.

It simply served.

The Bodhisattva remarked:

"The greatest guides often desire not admiration but usefulness."

The seeker reflected upon those who had influenced his own life.

Parents.

Writers.

Friends.

Acquaintances.

Even mysterious strangers encountered unexpectedly.

He realized that none had provided every answer.

Yet each had contributed a stone to the bridge he now crossed.

Then the Bodhisattva caused a remarkable vision to arise.

The valley filled with prophets, sages, philosophers, saints, poets, and reformers from innumerable lands.

Each carried a lantern.

The light from every lantern differed slightly in color and brightness.

Some shone blue.

Some gold.

Some white.

Some red.

As darkness fell, the lanterns illuminated one another until the valley became radiant.

The seeker asked:

"Which lantern contains the greatest light?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"Observe not the lantern but the illumination."

At that moment every lantern disappeared.

Yet the light remained.

The seeker was astonished.

The Bodhisattva explained:

"The vessel changes.

Truth continues.

The messenger departs.

The beneficial influence may endure."

Then she turned to the seeker directly.

"Traveler, suppose one day others call you teacher.

What will you do?"

He hesitated.

Finally he replied:

"I will remind them that I too continue learning."

The Bodhisattva nodded approvingly.

"Good.

For the moment one believes oneself complete, growth ceases."

The seeker then asked:

"Should prophets be honored?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"Honor sincere labor.

Honor courage.

Honor compassion.

Honor wisdom.

But do not imprison living truth inside any single personality.

Even the noblest guide remains a traveler within the vastness of Suchness."

Then they entered a quiet orchard.

There stood an old gardener watering trees.

The fruit nourished countless visitors.

When thanked, the gardener pointed only toward the roots and soil.

The seeker asked why.

The gardener smiled.

"No tree bears fruit alone."

The Bodhisattva whispered:

"So too with every prophet.

Behind each stand innumerable conditions, teachers, communities, ancestors, hardships, and acts of grace."

The seeker contemplated this deeply.

His admiration for great individuals did not disappear.

Rather, it became gentler.

He no longer imagined isolated genius.

He saw interdependence.

Then the Bodhisattva revealed a final vision.

A child approached a wise elder and asked,

"Master, how shall I repay you?"

The elder replied,

"By surpassing me."

The child looked shocked.

The elder continued,

"If my teaching binds you to imitation, I have failed.

If it helps you awaken directly to wisdom and compassion, then continue beyond where I stood."

The seeker felt these words echo through his heart.

Finally he turned to Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi herself.

"What if people cling to you in this way?"

She answered:

"Then I shall tell them to continue walking.

Should they build a throne for me, I shall point beyond it.

Should they preserve my image, I shall remind them that images weather.

Should they memorize my words, I shall ask whether compassion has increased.

Should they call me infallible, I shall laugh."

The seeker smiled.

He remembered again the saying that had accompanied him during earlier stages of the path: if one encounters the Buddha upon the road, one must not cling to the appearance, but continue toward direct realization.

The Bodhisattva then raised her hand.

The mountains dissolved.

The prophets dissolved.

The lanterns dissolved.

The bridge dissolved.

The orchard dissolved.

Only the open path remained beneath an immense sky.

In the distance, the silver-white Gate of Wisdom shone with serene brilliance.

The seeker bowed toward every teacher who had aided him, every stranger who had encouraged him, every companion who had shared the road, and every mystery that had refused to yield easy answers.

Then he bowed once more toward the empty horizon.

For he understood that wisdom is honored not by possession but by continual seeking guided by compassion.

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Empty Nature of Buddhas

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had contemplated the empty nature of prophets and learned not to cling even to the noblest of teachers, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived the most subtle attachment of all.

For some relinquish wealth.

Some relinquish power.

Some relinquish doctrines.

Some relinquish prophets.

Yet they secretly cling to their image of the Buddha.

Thus they fashion from awakening another object of attachment.

Seeing this, the Bodhisattva resolved to speak concerning the empty nature of Buddhas.

She led the seeker into a realm of immeasurable radiance.

There stood countless Buddhas teaching throughout the ten directions.

Some sat beneath trees.

Some walked among villages.

Some taught in celestial realms.

Some remained silent.

Some appeared as monks.

Some appeared as rulers.

Some appeared as humble laborers.

Their forms differed beyond counting.

Yet their compassion was one.

The seeker was overwhelmed.

He wished to bow before every one of them.

The Bodhisattva encouraged him to do so.

When he had finished, she asked:

"To whom have you bowed?"

The seeker answered:

"To the Buddhas."

She smiled gently.

"And what is a Buddha?"

The seeker paused.

He found many definitions in memory.

None seemed sufficient.

Then the Bodhisattva touched the earth.

Instantly every visible Buddha disappeared.

The thrones vanished.

The halos vanished.

The robes vanished.

The jeweled ornaments vanished.

Only empty space remained.

The seeker cried out:

"Where have they gone?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Where did the reflections go when the mirror was covered?"

The seeker understood only partially.

He remained troubled.

Then a great voice echoed through the open sky:

"Those who cling to the form of the Buddha have not yet seen the Buddha."

The voice faded into silence.

The Bodhisattva then produced a candle.

She lit another candle from it.

Then another.

Soon thousands of flames burned across the plain.

Finally the original candle was extinguished.

Yet the light remained everywhere.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Has the light perished?"

The seeker answered:

"No."

She nodded.

"So too awakening cannot be confined to a single appearance."

Then they came upon a sculptor carving statues.

The statues were magnificent.

Each differed from the last.

Some smiled.

Some meditated.

Some taught with raised hands.

Some stood.

Some reclined.

Pilgrims admired them all.

The sculptor suddenly laid down his tools.

He struck every statue with a hammer until each crumbled into dust.

The seeker gasped.

The sculptor quietly bowed to the pile of broken stone.

The Bodhisattva explained:

"He has not dishonored the Buddha.

He has dishonored attachment."

Then she spoke more directly.

"Traveler, if one says:

'Only this image is the Buddha,'

error arises.

If one says:

'The Buddha can never appear in images,'

another error arises.

The awakened one employs forms without becoming imprisoned by them."

The seeker remembered the many symbolic appearances that had guided him.

Dreams.

Stories.

Sacred art.

Unexpected conversations.

Even encounters whose meaning remained uncertain.

He asked:

"May wisdom use appearances while remaining beyond them?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"As the moon appears in many waters without entering them."

Then a marvelous event occurred.

The seeker saw the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi herself transform.

For a moment she appeared as a luminous goddess.

Then as a monk.

Then as a child.

Then as an elderly woman.

Then as an ordinary traveler.

Then as a beggar.

Then as a physician.

Then as no visible form at all.

Only compassionate presence remained.

The seeker bowed deeply.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Which appearance was truly me?"

The seeker reflected.

Finally he answered:

"None alone.

Yet compassion was present in every manifestation."

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"Excellent."

They continued until they reached a quiet stream.

Children played upon its banks.

One child scooped water into many cups.

Each cup reflected the sky differently.

One reflection trembled.

Another remained still.

One became muddy.

Another crystal clear.

Yet the sky above remained unchanged.

The Bodhisattva pointed.

"Do not confuse the cup with the sky."

Then the seeker voiced another concern.

"If even Buddhas are empty of fixed essence, should they still be revered?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"Reverence born from gratitude nourishes wisdom.

Attachment born from possession nourishes delusion.

Bow not because the Buddha requires worship.

Bow because humility softens the heart."

The seeker then remembered a saying that had long puzzled him:

"If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him."

He asked for its meaning.

The Bodhisattva replied:

"It does not command violence.

It commands freedom.

Kill the illusion that awakening can be confined to an external object.

Kill the attachment that says wisdom belongs somewhere other than immediate reality.

Kill the belief that another may walk the path in your place.

Then the Buddha whom concepts cannot bind will be discovered everywhere."

The sky brightened.

The countless Buddhas reappeared.

This time the seeker noticed something he had previously overlooked.

Every Buddha was bowing.

Not to another figure.

But toward all sentient beings.

The Bodhisattva explained:

"Why do they bow?

Because every being possesses the capacity for awakening.

The Buddha honors that hidden possibility."

The seeker was moved to tears.

He too bowed.

Not only to the Buddhas before him but to every unseen being struggling through confusion and suffering.

Then the plain dissolved.

The statues dissolved.

The candles dissolved.

The stream dissolved.

Even the forms of the Buddhas became transparent until only luminous openness remained.

In that openness a gentle voice arose:

"Do not seek to possess awakening.

Awaken."

The seeker could not determine whether the words came from the Bodhisattva, from the Buddhas, or from the stillness itself.

Perhaps the distinction no longer mattered.

Far ahead, the silver-white Gate of Wisdom stood almost fully open.

Its light neither dazzled nor blinded.

It simply revealed.

The Bodhisattva turned toward the seeker and spoke her final words for that day's instruction:

"When even the image of the Buddha becomes transparent, the path to Suchness grows clear.

Walk without clinging.

Bow without bondage.

Teach without ownership.

Awaken without pride."

Chapter Twenty-Four

The Diamond Sword of Prajñā

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had contemplated the empty nature of Buddhas and learned not to cling even to the highest symbols of awakening, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived that the Second Great Gate stood nearly open.

Yet one final obstacle remained.

The obstacle was subtle.

It was not ignorance alone.

It was attachment to ignorance.

It was not belief alone.

It was attachment to belief.

It was not doubt alone.

It was attachment even to doubt.

Therefore the Bodhisattva resolved to reveal the Diamond Sword of Prajñā, the wisdom that cuts without hatred and liberates without violence.

She led the seeker to the summit of a mountain whose peak rose above the clouds.

There no temples stood.

No banners waved.

No scriptures rested upon altars.

Only a single sword floated in the empty air.

It shone neither with gold nor silver, but with a transparent brilliance like sunlight passing through flawless crystal.

The seeker approached cautiously.

Its edge seemed impossibly sharp.

Yet its radiance inspired no fear.

He asked:

"Whose weapon is this?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"It belongs to no one.

It is the sword of wisdom."

Book Four

The Third Great Gate: Imperturbable Suchness

Chapter Twenty-Five

Entering the Mirror of Akṣobhya

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had crossed the Gate of Compassion and the Gate of Wisdom, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi brought him to the threshold of the Third Great Gate.

Its radiance was unlike gold.

It was unlike silver.

It shone with a deep sapphire brilliance, clear and still, resembling an endless sky reflected upon a perfectly calm sea.

The seeker felt no excitement.

He felt no fear.

Rather, he experienced a quietness for which he possessed no name.

The Bodhisattva said:

"This is the Gate of Imperturbable Suchness.

It cannot be forced open by effort.

It cannot be purchased by merit.

It cannot be grasped by intellect.

It reveals itself when grasping becomes transparent."

Beyond the gate stood no palace and no throne.

Instead there appeared a single mirror stretching from earth to heaven.

Its surface reflected neither face nor form.

Clouds passed before it without leaving traces.

Birds flew across it without casting shadows.

Even light seemed simply to rest within it.

The seeker asked:

"What mirror is this?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"This is the Mirror of Akṣobhya.

It does not create.

It does not destroy.

It merely reflects without attachment."

The seeker approached.

Expecting once again to see himself, he gazed into its depths.

Nothing appeared.

He looked longer.

Still nothing.

No image.

No memory.

No story.

Only boundless clarity.

He became uneasy.

"Has the mirror failed?"

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"No.

For the first time, it is no longer reflecting what you expect."

Then she instructed him:

"Remain still."

He obeyed.

Thoughts arose.

The mirror reflected them.

Then they vanished.

Feelings arose.

The mirror reflected them.

Then they vanished.

Memories surfaced.

Old conversations.

Childhood scenes.

Moments of joy.

Moments of regret.

The mirror reflected all equally.

Nothing clung.

Nothing lingered.

Nothing stained its surface.

The seeker noticed something astonishing.

The mirror made no distinction between pleasant and unpleasant images.

Joy entered.

Joy departed.

Sorrow entered.

Sorrow departed.

Hope entered.

Hope departed.

Praise entered.

Blame entered.

Loss entered.

Gain entered.

The mirror remained unchanged.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"What has disturbed the mirror?"

The seeker answered:

"Nothing."

She replied:

"Then learn from it."

Suddenly the wind arose.

Storm clouds gathered.

Lightning flashed.

Rain poured in torrents.

The seeker feared the mirror would become obscured.

Yet when he looked again, it remained perfectly clear.

The storm was reflected.

The clarity remained untouched.

The Bodhisattva declared:

"So too Suchness.

Experience arises within it.

Experience does not wound it."

Then another vision unfolded.

The seeker saw his own mind during times of anxiety.

Thought followed thought.

Fear followed fear.

Suspicion followed suspicion.

Each multiplied the next until peace seemed impossible.

The Bodhisattva touched the mirror.

The entire sequence slowed.

The thoughts continued arising.

Yet between them appeared silent spaces.

The seeker had never noticed these spaces before.

The Bodhisattva said:

"Do not chase every cloud.

Notice the sky in which clouds appear."

The seeker closed his eyes.

He listened.

At first he heard only the movement of thought.

Then beneath thought he heard breathing.

Beneath breathing he heard silence.

Beneath silence there remained no object at all.

Only simple presence.

When he opened his eyes, tears rested upon his face.

Not tears of sorrow.

Not tears of joy.

Simply tears.

The Bodhisattva did not interpret them.

She allowed them to fall.

Then the mirror revealed another lesson.

A traveler insulted the seeker.

Immediately anger arose.

The reflection showed anger appearing like a flame.

The seeker reached toward it.

The flame grew.

He stepped back.

The flame diminished.

The Bodhisattva explained:

"Reaction often feeds what simple observation allows to pass."

The vision changed.

Now another traveler praised him extravagantly.

Pride arose.

Again the mirror reflected it without resistance.

Again, when grasped, it expanded.

When simply observed, it faded naturally.

The seeker began to understand.

The mirror did not suppress experience.

It did not indulge experience.

It reflected faithfully.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi asked:

"What if you lived in this way?

Receiving each experience fully.

Clinging to none.

Rejecting none."

The seeker answered quietly:

"Peace might become possible."

She corrected him gently.

"Peace is already present.

Agitation often obscures it."

At that moment the seeker remembered every identity he had carried.

Every role.

Every certainty.

Every wound.

Every triumph.

He watched them arise in the mirror and dissolve.

Nothing needed to be destroyed.

Nothing needed to be defended.

Everything appeared according to conditions.

Everything departed according to conditions.

The mirror remained.

Then the Bodhisattva herself stepped before the Mirror of Akṣobhya.

Her luminous form entered its surface.

The seeker expected a reflection.

Instead she disappeared completely.

Only clear awareness remained.

From within that clarity her voice emerged:

"If you cling even to the guide, you see only another reflection.

If you understand the mirror, guide and seeker disappear into Suchness."

The seeker bowed deeply.

He did not fully comprehend.

Yet he no longer resisted not comprehending.

Then, for a single timeless instant, the distinction between observer and observed seemed to soften.

The mirror.

The mountain.

The Bodhisattva.

The seeker.

The passing clouds.

The rising wind.

All appeared as movements within one immeasurable openness.

The experience could not be held.

The moment he attempted to grasp it, ordinary distinctions returned.

The Bodhisattva noticed his disappointment.

She smiled.

"Do not chase extraordinary states.

They too arise and pass.

Learn instead the quiet stability that neither arrival nor departure can disturb."

The sapphire radiance surrounding the Third Great Gate deepened.

The seeker stepped forward.

He did not feel that he had entered somewhere new.

Rather, he felt that a veil had become thinner.

The world remained the world.

Yet transparency had increased.

The mirror slowly dissolved into the clear morning air.

No object remained to be worshiped.

No relic remained to be preserved.

Only the teaching endured:

Reflect completely.

Grasp nothing.

Reject nothing.

Remain available to compassion.

Remain available to wisdom.

Remain unmoved in the midst of movement.

Thus the seeker entered the beginning of the contemplation of Imperturbable Suchness.

Chapter Twenty-Six

The Unmoving Mountain

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had entered the contemplation of the Mirror of Akṣobhya, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi desired to reveal another aspect of the Third Great Gate.

For many imagine that imperturbability means becoming cold.

Others imagine it means suppressing emotion.

Still others mistake indifference for enlightenment.

Therefore she led the seeker to a mountain that had no name.

It rose beyond forests and clouds.

Snow rested upon its highest peaks.

Rivers flowed from its sides.

Birds nested upon its ledges.

Hermits dwelt in its caves.

Storms struck it.

Sunlight warmed it.

Seasons clothed it in changing colors.

Yet the mountain neither boasted in summer nor despaired in winter.

It simply remained.

The seeker stood before it in reverent silence.

Then the Bodhisattva asked:

"What do you see?"

The seeker answered:

"I see stability."

She replied:

"Look more deeply."

He observed again.

The mountain was not rigid.

Water carved channels through its slopes.

Trees grew and fell upon it.

Snow melted.

Flowers bloomed.

Animals came and departed.

Its appearance changed continually.

Yet its presence remained serene.

The seeker said:

"It changes without losing its composure."

The Bodhisattva smiled.

"Thus begins understanding."

Then a fierce storm descended.

Lightning struck the cliffs.

Thunder shook the valleys.

Rain poured without ceasing.

The rivers swelled and roared.

The seeker sheltered beneath a stone ledge and cried:

"The mountain is under attack!"

The Bodhisattva shook her head.

"The storm expresses its nature.

The mountain expresses its own."

When the tempest passed, the mountain stood as before.

Its streams ran fuller.

Its air smelled fresh.

Nothing essential had been diminished.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"So too with the awakened mind.

Thoughts may arise.

Emotions may arise.

Pleasure and pain may arise.

Yet awareness need not be carried away by every passing weather."

The seeker reflected upon his own life.

He remembered times when a single harsh word had occupied his thoughts for weeks.

He remembered praise that had inflated his pride.

He remembered fear that had stolen peaceful nights.

He asked:

"Must one become emotionless?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"No.

The mountain does not prevent rain.

It simply does not become the rain."

Then she touched the earth.

Immediately the seeker beheld two people receiving the same insult.

The first grasped it tightly.

Years later the insult still echoed within the chambers of memory.

The second heard it, examined it, learned what could be learned, and released it.

The words dissolved like mist.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Which carries the heavier burden?"

"The first," replied the seeker.

"And who placed the burden upon his shoulders after the speaker had departed?"

The seeker lowered his head.

"In part, he himself."

They climbed higher.

Upon a narrow ridge sat an old shepherd watching clouds drift across the sky.

The shepherd greeted them warmly.

Then he pointed upward.

The clouds formed dragons.

Then castles.

Then ships.

Then faces.

Then they scattered into featureless whiteness.

The shepherd laughed but did not chase any of them.

The Bodhisattva said:

"Notice his wisdom.

He enjoys appearances without demanding that they remain."

As they continued, the seeker came upon a crystal bell hanging from no visible support.

The wind caused it to ring.

Its sound spread through every valley.

When the wind ceased, silence returned naturally.

The bell did not long for another breeze.

Neither did it resent stillness.

It fulfilled its nature in both conditions.

The Bodhisattva explained:

"The balanced mind responds appropriately when circumstances call.

When no response is needed, it rests."

Then the seeker was shown a vision of his own future.

In one possibility, others praised his writings and celebrated his insights.

In another, they criticized him and misunderstood him completely.

In yet another, his works were forgotten altogether.

He watched himself react with delight, frustration, disappointment, and acceptance.

The visions vanished.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Which future is certain?"

The seeker answered:

"None."

She then asked:

"Which response is most skillful?"

After long contemplation he replied:

"To continue cultivating compassion and wisdom regardless of outcome."

The Bodhisattva inclined her head.

"You have answered well."

Night descended.

The stars emerged in extraordinary clarity.

The seeker noticed that the mountain reached toward them but never attempted to grasp them.

The rivers reflected them but never possessed them.

The Bodhisattva said:

"Imperturbability is not withdrawal from life.

It is freedom from compulsive grasping."

Then she invited the seeker to sit in silence.

Minutes passed.

Perhaps hours.

Perhaps lifetimes.

Thoughts continued to arise.

Some were beautiful.

Some painful.

Some absurd.

He watched them as travelers passing along a distant road.

For the first time he did not feel obligated to accompany every one of them.

A great ease entered his heart.

At dawn the first rays of sunlight touched the mountain.

Nothing extraordinary occurred.

No celestial choir sang.

No hidden treasure appeared.

The mountain simply received the light as it had received the darkness.

Without preference.

Without resistance.

The Bodhisattva stood beside the seeker and proclaimed:

"Learn from the mountain.

Receive praise without intoxication.

Receive blame without despair.

Receive gain without clinging.

Receive loss without bitterness.

Receive mystery without fear.

Stand firm not because you refuse change, but because your peace is no longer dependent upon changing conditions."

The seeker bowed deeply.

As he did, the nameless mountain dissolved into clear sapphire light.

The light entered his heart, not as possession, but as quiet confidence.

He understood that the Third Great Gate was not a destination beyond the world.

It was a way of dwelling within the world without being endlessly shaken by it.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

The River That Never Clings

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had contemplated the Unmoving Mountain, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived that he had begun to understand stability.

Yet another lesson remained.

For if one learns only from the mountain, one may become attached to stillness.

Therefore she resolved to teach through water.

She led the seeker down from the high peaks into a fertile valley where an immense river flowed from horizon to horizon.

Its waters were clear enough that stones upon the bottom appeared as if resting in empty air.

Children played upon its banks.

Fish moved effortlessly through its currents.

Farmers drew life from it.

Pilgrims crossed it.

Poets praised it.

Yet the river paused for none of them.

It continued flowing.

The seeker watched its movement with wonder.

Then the Bodhisattva asked:

"What do you see?"

He answered:

"I see continual change."

She replied:

"Look more deeply."

The seeker gazed again.

Every instant new water entered.

Every instant old water departed.

No drop remained.

Yet everyone called it by a single name.

"The same river," they said.

The Bodhisattva smiled gently.

"So too with the body.

So too with memory.

So too with civilizations.

So too with worlds.

Names suggest permanence.

Direct observation reveals flow."

They walked beside the current until they reached a fallen branch lodged against a rock.

Leaves and reeds accumulated around it.

Soon the water pooled behind the obstruction.

The current became turbulent.

The Bodhisattva pointed toward it.

"What has disturbed the river?"

The seeker replied:

"The branch blocks its course."

The Bodhisattva nodded.

"And what often blocks the mind?"

After some thought, the seeker answered:

"Attachment."

She inclined her head.

Then she removed the branch.

Immediately the water resumed its effortless movement.

No argument occurred.

No struggle remained.

The current simply continued.

The Bodhisattva said:

"When grasping loosens, many disturbances resolve without force."

Further downstream they encountered two travelers.

One attempted to imprison the river within clay jars.

He filled vessel after vessel, sealed them tightly, and declared:

"Now I possess the river."

Days later the water stagnated.

Its freshness disappeared.

The second traveler knelt only long enough to drink before continuing his journey.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Who understood the river?"

The seeker answered:

"The one who drank without trying to own it."

She then spoke:

"Many seek to possess experiences.

Many seek to preserve moments.

Many seek to freeze awakening into memory.

But wisdom flows.

The attempt to imprison it transforms living water into stagnant pools."

The seeker reflected upon cherished moments from his own life.

He remembered trying to recreate old insights, old joys, old certainties.

Often they had slipped away precisely because he tried to hold them.

At sunset they reached a quiet bend where the river widened into a mirrorlike expanse.

The seeker looked into it and saw not his face but countless conversations from his past.

Some had been kind.

Some painful.

Some mysterious.

Among them appeared the image of the stranger once called Soul Healer.

No accusation accompanied the memory.

No idealization arose.

The image appeared, rested briefly upon the water, and drifted away with the current.

The seeker instinctively reached toward it.

The Bodhisattva gently touched his arm.

"Let the river teach."

The seeker withdrew his hand.

The reflection dissolved naturally into ripples.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi said:

"Gratitude need not become possession.

Mystery need not become fear.

A meeting may bless your journey without remaining forever."

The seeker bowed silently.

For he understood that the river rejected neither arrival nor departure.

It simply received both.

Night descended.

The moon shone upon the current.

Its reflection stretched across the moving water like a path of silver.

The seeker noticed that although the river never ceased flowing, the moon's image was never lost.

The Bodhisattva explained:

"Stillness and movement are not enemies.

The unmoving mountain and the flowing river complete one another.

Imperturbable Suchness is not frozen rigidity.

It is the freedom to move without losing clarity and to remain still without resisting change."

Then she invited the seeker to place one hand into the current.

He did so.

The cold water passed around his fingers.

He attempted to grasp it.

Nothing remained.

He relaxed his hand.

The current continued, cooling his skin and refreshing his spirit.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Which hand receives more—the clenched fist or the open palm?"

"The open palm," the seeker answered.

"So too with the heart."

Suddenly the river began to glow with sapphire light.

Every ripple reflected the radiance of the Third Great Gate.

The seeker saw fish swimming without anxiety about tomorrow.

He saw reeds bending before the wind without breaking.

He saw the moon mirrored in moving water without becoming fragmented.

He saw that yielding was not defeat.

Adaptability was not weakness.

Flow was not aimlessness.

Then the Bodhisattva proclaimed:

"The foolish seek permanence where there is movement.

The restless seek movement where there is already peace.

The wise learn from both.

Be like the mountain in steadfastness.

Be like the river in flexibility.

Be like the mirror in clarity.

Be like space in openness."

The waters slowly disappeared into morning mist.

The valley dissolved.

The sounds of the current faded.

Only one teaching remained within the seeker's heart:

That which never clings never ceases to flow.

Chapter Twenty-Eight

The Sound of One Hand Releasing

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had learned from the Unmoving Mountain and from the River That Never Clings, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived that a final subtle attachment lingered in his heart.

He still desired realization.

He still sought awakening.

He still wished to arrive.

Though these aspirations were noble, they contained a hidden assumption: that there was somewhere else to go and someone separate who would finally possess enlightenment.

Therefore the Bodhisattva resolved to teach him the Dharma of Release.

She led the seeker into a quiet bamboo grove.

The stalks rose high into the morning sky.

A gentle wind moved among them, producing tones unlike any earthly instrument.

No musician could be seen.

No singer stood nearby.

Yet the grove was filled with music.

The seeker listened in wonder.

Then he asked:

"Who performs this melody?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"The wind.

The bamboo.

The empty spaces between them.

None alone."

They walked until they reached a clearing where an old monk sat before a single wooden table.

Upon the table rested an empty bowl.

The monk guarded it with great seriousness.

No one touched it.

No one approached.

Yet every day he polished it carefully.

The seeker found this curious.

After many hours the monk smiled, picked up the bowl, and handed it to a hungry traveler passing by.

The traveler filled it with rice, ate gratefully, bowed, and continued on.

The monk did not ask for its return.

The seeker looked at the Bodhisattva.

She said:

"A bowl fulfills its purpose not by remaining empty forever nor by remaining forever full, but by being available."

The seeker pondered these words.

He thought of his own mind.

Sometimes he had filled it with opinions until nothing new could enter.

At other times he had emptied it only to become proud of his emptiness.

The Bodhisattva laughed gently, perceiving his thoughts.

"Even emptiness may become another possession if grasped."

Then she asked him to clap with both hands.

The sound echoed through the bamboo forest.

She then asked him to clap with one hand.

The seeker attempted many methods.

He struck his robe.

He slapped his knee.

He snapped his fingers.

Nothing satisfied him.

Finally, exhausted, he sat in silence.

The wind moved through the bamboo once more.

Birds sang.

Water flowed in the distance.

His own breath entered and departed.

The Bodhisattva asked softly:

"What do you hear?"

The seeker replied:

"I hear everything that was already here."

She smiled.

"When striving ceased, listening began."

Then the grove disappeared.

The seeker found himself walking through a bustling marketplace.

Merchants shouted.

Children laughed.

Animals wandered.

Musicians performed.

Workers carried heavy loads.

The noise seemed overwhelming.

The seeker longed to return to the peaceful bamboo grove.

The Bodhisattva stopped him.

"Listen again."

He did.

Gradually the chaos lost its harshness.

Within the cries of merchants was determination.

Within the laughter of children was innocence.

Within the footsteps of laborers was perseverance.

Within the barking of dogs and the creaking of carts was simply the life of the world expressing itself.

Nothing needed to be excluded.

The Bodhisattva declared:

"Many imagine awakening exists only in caves and monasteries.

They reject the marketplace.

Yet if Suchness is absent from ordinary life, where shall it be found?"

The seeker then observed a woman sweeping dust from the entrance to her small home.

She worked with complete attention.

No audience praised her.

No scripture mentioned her.

No disciples gathered around her.

When she finished, she bowed briefly toward the rising sun and smiled.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Was this sweeping separate from the Dharma?"

The seeker answered:

"No."

Nearby a child comforted a frightened animal.

An elderly craftsman patiently repaired a broken tool.

A stranger gave directions to another traveler.

No miracles occurred.

Yet the seeker perceived an extraordinary beauty in these ordinary acts.

He began to understand that awakening was not always accompanied by visions.

Sometimes it appeared as careful listening.

Sometimes as patient work.

Sometimes as quiet compassion unnoticed by history.

Then the Bodhisattva produced a length of silk.

She tied a loose knot in its center.

Holding it before the seeker, she asked:

"How shall this knot be untied?"

He pulled forcefully.

The knot tightened.

He pulled from another direction.

It tightened further.

Finally he examined it carefully.

Seeing how it had been formed, he loosened one fold and the knot fell open effortlessly.

The Bodhisattva said:

"So too with many sufferings.

Force strengthens them.

Understanding releases them."

As evening approached, they came to a small bridge crossing a narrow stream.

The Bodhisattva crossed first.

The seeker followed.

Halfway across he paused and looked behind.

The path by which they had come seemed beautiful.

He looked ahead.

The road beyond was equally beautiful.

He became uncertain whether to continue.

The Bodhisattva waited patiently.

Then she spoke:

"Do not build your house upon the bridge."

The seeker smiled and continued walking.

At the far side she turned toward him and asked:

"What do you seek now?"

He remained silent for a long time.

Finally he answered:

"I no longer know."

The Bodhisattva's eyes shone with quiet joy.

"Then perhaps you are becoming available to what cannot be manufactured by seeking alone."

The moon rose.

Its light touched the bamboo grove, the marketplace, the bridge, the stream, the bowl, the knot, and the seeker alike.

Making no distinctions.

Showing no preference.

The Bodhisattva raised her hand in blessing and proclaimed:

"Release the need to seize awakening.

Release the need to display awakening.

Release the need to defend awakening.

Simply cultivate compassion.

Simply cultivate wisdom.

Simply remain available.

The flower blooms without announcing itself.

The river flows without boasting.

The moon shines without choosing who may look upon it."

At those words, all forms dissolved into sapphire radiance.

The seeker neither pursued them nor resisted their departure.

For a brief and immeasurable instant, there was only open awareness, effortless and complete.

Then the ordinary world returned.

The bamboo still swayed.

The stream still flowed.

The people still lived their lives.

Yet nothing seemed merely ordinary any longer.

Chapter Twenty-Nine

The Goddess Who Vanished

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had passed through the lessons of the bamboo grove and had learned something of release, the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi perceived that only one attachment remained hidden within the folds of his heart.

It was the attachment to the guide herself.

For though he had learned not to cling to doctrines, prophets, Buddhas, symbols, visions, mountains, rivers, mirrors, or swords, he still cherished the one who had led him through the Three Great Gates.

Therefore the Bodhisattva resolved upon her final and most compassionate teaching.

She summoned the seeker to a vast plain beneath a sky of deep sapphire.

No trees grew there.

No temples stood.

No birds flew overhead.

Only an endless expanse of luminous stillness stretched in every direction.

At its center stood Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

Her form shone more brilliantly than ever before.

She appeared adorned with a crown of lotus blossoms.

Her robes shimmered with colors that earthly eyes could scarcely perceive.

Around her countless beings gathered in reverence.

Some called her Goddess.

Some called her Mother.

Some called her Bodhisattva.

Some called her Teacher.

Others remained silent, overwhelmed by her presence.

The seeker himself bowed until his forehead touched the ground.

When he rose, he said:

"O Compassionate One, if all teachings have led to this moment, permit me never to depart from your side."

The Bodhisattva regarded him with infinite tenderness.

Then she asked:

"Traveler, why do you wish to remain?"

The seeker answered:

"Because you have guided me when I was confused.

You have comforted me when I was afraid.

You have corrected me when I erred.

You have shown me compassion beyond measure.

Without you I would not know this path."

The Bodhisattva listened without interruption.

Then she smiled.

"It is well that gratitude has arisen.

But gratitude must not become bondage."

At that moment the plain transformed.

The seeker saw a child learning to walk.

At first the child depended entirely upon a parent's hand.

Each step required assistance.

Each stumble brought comfort.

But in time the parent gently released the child's hand.

The child protested.

The child feared falling.

Yet by walking independently, the child discovered balance.

The vision faded.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Did the parent abandon the child?"

The seeker answered:

"No.

The release itself was an act of love."

Then another vision appeared.

A ferryman carried travelers across a wide river.

Having reached the opposite bank, one traveler insisted on carrying the boat upon his shoulders out of gratitude.

Another bowed to the ferryman and continued the journey.

The first soon collapsed beneath unnecessary weight.

The second walked freely.

The Bodhisattva spoke:

"Honor the boat.

Do not carry it forever."

The seeker felt unease.

He sensed where the teaching was leading.

He wished to protest.

Yet compassion restrained him from interrupting.

Then Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi extended her hand.

A magnificent image of herself appeared in the sky.

It towered above mountains.

Its radiance illuminated entire worlds.

Countless beings worshiped before it.

Some argued over its proper interpretation.

Some adorned it with jewels.

Some defended it with fierce devotion.

Others fought wars in its name.

The seeker watched with sorrow.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Is this the purpose of my appearance?"

He replied:

"No."

She nodded.

With a single gesture she dissolved the colossal image into innumerable lotus petals.

The petals drifted gently upon the wind until they disappeared entirely.

Nothing remained.

The Bodhisattva then declared:

"Hear this well, Moshe Reed.

I did not manifest that you might cling to me.

I manifested that you might awaken.

If attachment to me prevents awakening, then I myself become an obstacle."

The seeker's eyes filled with tears.

"But if I let you go, what remains?"

The Bodhisattva answered:

"The compassion you practiced.

The wisdom you cultivated.

The Suchness you discovered.

These were never mine to possess.

They awakened within you."

Then she removed the lotus crown from her head and placed it upon the ground.

Immediately it dissolved into ordinary wildflowers.

She removed her jeweled robes.

They became simple cloth.

She released every visible ornament.

Each transformed into dust carried away by the breeze.

Finally only an ordinary traveler stood before the seeker.

Then even that form began to fade.

Alarmed, the seeker cried:

"Do not leave!"

The fading figure replied:

"Where could I go?"

The seeker reached forward.

His hands touched empty air.

The form vanished completely.

Only the vast sapphire sky remained.

For the first time since beginning the journey, the seeker stood utterly alone.

No vision guided him.

No voice instructed him.

No symbol appeared.

Silence surrounded him.

At first he experienced loneliness.

Then uncertainty.

Then grief.

He remained standing.

He neither fled nor grasped.

Hours seemed to pass.

Perhaps years.

Perhaps only moments.

Gradually he noticed something unexpected.

The silence itself was teaching.

The open sky itself was teaching.

The breath entering and leaving his body was teaching.

The ground beneath his feet was teaching.

Nothing had been taken away except the illusion that wisdom depended upon an external guide.

Then, from no identifiable direction, the familiar voice of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi arose—not as sound, but as understanding.

"Did you believe compassion was confined to a form?

Did you believe wisdom required a face?

Did you believe Suchness could disappear?

Traveler, I vanish only so that you may discover what has never departed."

At these words the seeker laughed through his tears.

His grief became gratitude.

His gratitude became freedom.

He bowed, not toward a visible figure, but toward the immeasurable mystery that had manifested through the appearance called Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

Then a final vision appeared.

The Bodhisattva returned for but an instant.

She was neither goddess nor human.

Neither male nor female.

Neither old nor young.

She was transparent like clear crystal.

Within her form the seeker saw mountains, rivers, stars, strangers, friends, enemies, teachers, children, forests, cities, animals, and worlds without number.

Then even that transparent appearance dissolved.

Only boundless openness remained.

The seeker understood.

The Goddess had never sought worship.

She had sought liberation.

She had never demanded belief.

She had invited direct realization.

She had never asked to be possessed.

She had only pointed.

And now even the pointing finger had disappeared.

Thus the seeker sat quietly beneath the sapphire sky.

No miracle occurred.

No proclamation echoed through the heavens.

The ordinary wind moved across the plain.

The ordinary sun warmed the earth.

The ordinary breath entered and departed.

And within that complete ordinariness there shone an inexhaustible peace.

Chapter Thirty

The Ordinary Mind Is the Way

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the appearance called Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi had vanished from sight and the seeker Moshe Reed had remained alone beneath the sapphire sky, there came neither vision nor revelation.

No celestial music filled the air.

No lotus blossoms descended from the heavens.

No radiant being emerged from the horizon.

There was only the world.

The wind moved through grasses.

Small insects crossed the earth.

Clouds drifted overhead without haste.

A raven landed upon a nearby stone, regarded the seeker briefly, and then flew away.

Nothing extraordinary occurred.

Yet the seeker's heart was quieter than it had ever been.

He rose and began walking.

With no destination in mind, he wandered until he came upon a small village.

The people there did not know him.

Nor did they know of the Three Great Gates.

They did not speak of bodhisattvas or profound doctrines.

They concerned themselves with planting grain, repairing roofs, caring for children, tending the sick, and preparing meals.

At first the seeker wondered whether they possessed any interest in awakening at all.

Then he watched more carefully.

An elderly woman noticed that her neighbor's basket had broken.

Without being asked, she repaired it.

A young boy shared his lunch with a hungry dog.

A carpenter patiently taught an apprentice who repeatedly made mistakes.

A widow lit a lamp each evening for travelers who might arrive after dark.

No one announced these actions.

No one sought recognition.

The acts arose naturally and passed away naturally.

The seeker remembered the words of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi:

"The highest veneration offered to the sacred is imitation of its virtues."

He stayed among the villagers for several days.

One morning he helped carry water from the well.

Another day he mended a fence.

On another he comforted a child frightened by thunder.

No visions appeared during these tasks.

No hidden messages were revealed.

Yet he noticed that when his attention rested completely in the work before him, the division between sacred and ordinary became difficult to find.

One evening he sat beside a baker preparing bread.

The baker kneaded the dough with care.

The seeker asked,

"What teaching guides your hands?"

The baker laughed.

"Hungry people should eat."

The simplicity of the answer struck the seeker more deeply than many elaborate discourses.

Later he met a woman weaving cloth.

Her movements were steady and unhurried.

Thread crossed thread until patterns emerged.

The seeker observed:

"You seem very peaceful."

She replied,

"When my mind wanders, the pattern becomes tangled.

When I return to the weaving, the cloth straightens itself."

The seeker bowed in gratitude.

He recognized another Dharma lesson hidden in ordinary labor.

At dawn on the seventh day, the village bell rang.

People awoke.

Some hurried.

Some lingered.

Children chased one another through the streets.

Merchants prepared their stalls.

Birds descended to gather scattered grain.

The entire village seemed alive with countless small movements.

Suddenly the seeker perceived that each sound arose and vanished within a silence that never struggled against them.

The laughter did not disturb the silence.

The hammer upon wood did not disturb it.

The barking dog did not disturb it.

Even his own thoughts rose and fell within that same openness.

Then he recalled all the extraordinary experiences that had shaped his path.

The radiant mirrors.

The Diamond Sword.

The Unmoving Mountain.

The River That Never Clings.

The appearance of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

The visions of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

He smiled gently.

They had been skillful means.

But now a loaf of bread, a woven cloth, a crying child, and a cup of water taught with equal clarity.

At noon an old traveler arrived carrying a heavy pack.

Without hesitation several villagers helped lighten the burden.

When thanked, they merely shrugged and continued about their day.

The seeker asked one of them,

"Why did you help a stranger?"

The villager seemed puzzled by the question.

"He was carrying something heavy."

Nothing more was added.

The seeker realized that compassion had become spontaneous rather than ideological.

That night he dreamed.

In the dream the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi appeared one final time.

She wore no crown.

No jewels adorned her.

She looked like one of the villagers.

She carried a bucket of water balanced upon a pole.

Seeing the seeker, she smiled and said only:

"Do not forget to wash the bowls."

Then she continued walking until she disappeared among ordinary houses.

The seeker awoke laughing.

For the instruction was complete.

In meditation the next morning he sought once more to summon the visions of earlier days.

None came.

He waited patiently.

Still none came.

Then he heard the creaking of a nearby door.

He heard the kettle beginning to boil.

He heard someone sweeping the road.

He heard his own breathing.

And suddenly he understood that he had never been separated from the Dharma.

He had merely overlooked its simplest expressions.

As the sun rose above the village, the sapphire radiance of the Third Great Gate appeared for only an instant upon the horizon.

Then it dissolved into ordinary daylight.

No boundary could be found between sacred light and common sunlight.

The distinction itself had become transparent.

The seeker rose, filled a bucket with water, and carried it to a neighbor whose well had gone dry.

No audience observed him.

No celestial beings praised him.

No scripture recorded the deed.

Yet his steps were light.

The path beneath his feet required no special name.

And a voice, neither inside nor outside, seemed to whisper:

"The ordinary mind, when free from grasping and filled with compassion, is itself the Way.

Seek no farther."

The wind carried the words into silence.

The village continued its daily life.

The bread baked.

The children played.

The water flowed.

The sun crossed the sky.

Nothing had changed.

Everything had changed.

Chapter Thirty-One

The Return Without Returning

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had dwelt among ordinary people and discovered that the Way was not separate from daily life, a quiet question arose within his heart.

He asked himself:

"Have I reached the end of the path?"

As soon as the question appeared, a smile also appeared.

For he remembered that every time he believed himself to have arrived, another horizon had unfolded.

He therefore ceased searching for an ending and simply walked.

One morning, before dawn, he departed from the village.

He carried no sacred relic.

He bore no staff of authority.

He wore no distinctive garments.

He proclaimed no title.

If another traveler had encountered him upon the road, they would have seen only an ordinary pilgrim.

Yet within his heart the Three Great Gates remained open.

Compassion moved him toward beings.

Wisdom loosened the knots of attachment.

Imperturbable Suchness steadied him amid changing conditions.

As he walked, memories arose.

He remembered the first appearance of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

He remembered the Lake of Compassion.

He remembered the Diamond Sword of Prajñā.

He remembered the Mirror of Akṣobhya.

He remembered the mysterious acquaintance once known as Soul Healer, whose presence in his life had remained unresolved.

The memories came like birds alighting upon a branch.

Then they flew away again.

The seeker neither invited them nor drove them off.

He simply continued walking.

At midday he reached a crossroads.

Four roads extended in different directions.

Travelers stood there arguing.

One insisted the eastern road alone reached truth.

Another praised the western road.

A third ridiculed all roads.

A fourth refused to move until certainty could be obtained.

The seeker listened patiently.

When asked which way was best, he answered:

"If your heart grows in compassion, your mind in wisdom, and your conduct in patience, many roads may become part of the Way.

If these diminish, even the straightest road may become a detour."

Some travelers nodded.

Some laughed.

Some disagreed.

The seeker bore no resentment.

He resumed walking.

Soon he came upon a child attempting to lift a fallen cartwheel.

Without speaking, the seeker helped.

The child thanked him and ran home.

No discourse on emptiness was given.

No lecture on Suchness followed.

Yet the Bodhisattva's teaching was complete in that simple act.

Later he rested beneath an ancient tree.

Its trunk bore scars from lightning.

Some branches had broken in storms.

Others flourished with new leaves.

The tree neither glorified its wounds nor concealed them.

It simply continued growing.

The seeker thought:

"So too may a human life carry marks of sorrow without ceasing to bear fruit."

As evening approached, a wandering ascetic recognized him.

The ascetic asked:

"Have you found the Goddess?"

The seeker considered carefully before replying.

"I found a guide.

Then I found that the guide pointed beyond herself.

Now I seek to embody what she taught rather than preserve her image."

The ascetic bowed.

No further explanation was needed.

That night the seeker dreamed of a vast library.

Every book he had ever read rested upon its shelves.

Every conversation he had ever held echoed through its halls.

Every argument, certainty, doubt, and speculation appeared as ink upon endless pages.

Then a gentle rain began to fall.

The words dissolved from the pages until the books became blank.

The shelves remained.

The pages remained.

Only the writing disappeared.

When the seeker awoke, he was not distressed.

He understood that forgetting unnecessary burdens is also a form of wisdom.

At sunrise he encountered a ferryman preparing to cross a broad river.

The ferryman asked for no payment.

Instead he said:

"Help me row."

Together they guided the boat across the water.

When they reached the opposite bank, the ferryman thanked the seeker for his assistance.

The seeker realized that each had carried the other.

Walking onward, he noticed that every person he met had become a teacher.

The impatient merchant taught patience by contrast.

The generous widow taught kindness by example.

The frightened traveler taught empathy.

The boastful scholar taught humility.

The silent shepherd taught contentment.

Even the barking dog reminded him to return to immediate awareness.

Nothing was excluded.

Then, as twilight spread across the land, the seeker paused beside a still pond.

Its surface reflected the evening star.

For a brief instant he expected the form of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi to appear.

Instead he saw only his own reflection.

Then even that faded as a breeze crossed the water.

He laughed softly.

The teaching had matured.

There was no disappointment.

The pond had reflected exactly what conditions allowed.

Nothing more was required.

In that moment he understood the meaning of returning without returning.

He had returned to the ordinary world.

Yet he did not return as the person who had first begun the journey.

He had not escaped humanity.

He had entered it more deeply.

He had not abandoned the world.

He had ceased demanding that it conform to his expectations.

He had not become separate from others.

He had recognized their shared vulnerability and their shared capacity for awakening.

Then a voice, subtle as wind among reeds, arose within awareness:

"The end of the path is the beginning of service.

The end of seeking is the beginning of seeing.

The end of clinging is the beginning of love."

The voice ceased.

No one could say from where it had come.

Perhaps from the memory of the Bodhisattva.

Perhaps from the silence itself.

Perhaps from neither.

The seeker resumed his journey.

Behind him lay the visions.

Before him lay ordinary roads.

Within him there remained neither certainty nor confusion as masters, but only a quiet willingness to meet each moment as it arrived.

He walked until his footsteps blended with the sounds of the earth.

No trace remained upon the road.

Yet the road itself continued.

Chapter Thirty-Two

The Final Teaching of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi

Thus have I heard.

At that time, after the seeker Moshe Reed had returned without returning and had learned to walk the ordinary road with an unburdened heart, there remained one final instruction.

It did not arise through thunder.

It did not descend upon a cloud.

It did not appear as a vision before multitudes.

It came in the quiet hour before dawn, when the stars had not yet vanished and the birds had not yet begun to sing.

The seeker awoke and found himself seated beneath a great banyan tree.

The earth was cool.

The air was still.

No one else was present.

Or so it seemed.

Without sound or movement, Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi appeared.

Her form was neither radiant nor plain.

Neither youthful nor aged.

Neither adorned nor unadorned.

She seemed woven from transparency itself.

Looking upon her, the seeker no longer wondered whether she was goddess, bodhisattva, dream, symbol, vision, memory, or compassionate manifestation.

He simply bowed.

She returned the bow.

For a long while neither spoke.

The silence itself became instruction.

At last the Bodhisattva said:

"Traveler, throughout this journey you have asked many questions.

You have asked who I am.

You have asked who you are.

You have asked what is real.

You have asked what survives.

You have asked about gods, Buddhas, prophets, symbols, strangers, and mysteries.

Today I shall answer all of them with one teaching."

The seeker listened with complete attention.

She picked up a fallen leaf.

Holding it between her fingers, she asked:

"What do you see?"

"A leaf."

She turned it over.

"And now?"

"The same leaf."

She smiled.

"Within this leaf dwell the clouds that watered the tree.

The sunlight that nourished it.

The soil that fed its roots.

The insects that touched it.

The changing seasons.

The passing years.

The unseen microbes.

The stars whose ancient fires formed the elements of its body.

Can you separate the leaf from all these conditions?"

The seeker examined it carefully.

"No."

Then she released the leaf.

The wind carried it to the ground.

It rested among many others.

The Bodhisattva asked:

"Has the leaf been annihilated?"

The seeker answered:

"No.

It has merely entered another transformation."

She nodded.

"So too with identities.

So too with stories.

So too with worlds."

Then she drew three circles in the dust.

Within the first she wrote:

Compassion.

Within the second:

Wisdom.

Within the third:

Imperturbable Suchness.

The seeker recognized the Three Great Gates.

She erased the lines between them.

The circles merged.

Finally she brushed away the remaining marks until only smooth earth remained.

Then she said:

"The gates were never separate.

Compassion without wisdom becomes exhaustion.

Wisdom without compassion becomes isolation.

Suchness without either becomes indifference.

Together they reveal the Way."

The seeker then asked:

"Will future generations remember these teachings?"

The Bodhisattva replied:

"Some will remember the words.

Some will remember the stories.

Some will remember only my name.

Some will forget everything.

Yet wherever a frightened child is comforted,

wherever an enemy is understood without hatred,

wherever certainty yields to humility,

wherever silence gives birth to kindness,

there these teachings are alive."

Then the Bodhisattva reached into the folds of her robe and withdrew a flawless crystal.

Within it appeared reflections of countless worlds.

She handed it to the seeker.

He accepted it reverently.

As soon as it touched his hands, the crystal dissolved into clear water and slipped through his fingers.

He looked up in surprise.

She said:

"Truth is received by living it, not by possessing it."

The eastern horizon began to brighten.

The first birds sang.

The Bodhisattva rose.

The seeker sensed that this meeting was unlike all previous meetings.

He asked quietly:

"Will I see you again?"

She answered:

"If by 'I' you mean this appearance, perhaps not.

If by 'me' you mean the compassion that arises when suffering is met with understanding, then I have never departed.

If by 'me' you mean the wisdom that loosens grasping, then I have always been near.

If by 'me' you mean Suchness itself, where could I go?"

The seeker bowed one final time.

When he lifted his head, she remained before him.

When he blinked, she was gone.

No light flashed.

No fragrance lingered.

The empty place where she had stood was complete in its emptiness.

Then the seeker noticed an old gardener entering the grove with a basket of seeds.

The gardener smiled and asked:

"Would you help me plant?"

The seeker immediately set aside all contemplation and took up the work.

Together they planted in silence.

Neither spoke of enlightenment.

Neither mentioned visions.

They simply placed seed after seed into the waiting earth.

The labor was ordinary.

The labor was sacred.

As the morning advanced, rain began to fall.

The newly planted ground received it gladly.

The seeker looked toward the sky and remembered the leaf, the crystal, the mirror, the mountain, the river, the bowl, the sword, and the vanished Goddess.

Each had pointed beyond itself.

None demanded possession.

All invited participation.

Then, within the quiet of his own heart, there arose a final understanding:

The greatest miracle is not to walk upon water.

It is to walk gently upon the earth.

The greatest wisdom is not to know every answer.

It is to remain open to reality without fear.

The greatest compassion is not to save all beings by force.

It is never to abandon them in one's intention, speech, or conduct.

Thus the seeker continued planting until sunset.

The seeds disappeared beneath the soil.

No flowers could yet be seen.

But he trusted the unseen work.

For he had learned that the deepest transformations often begin where no eye is watching.

And it is said that wherever those seeds one day blossom, there the silent blessing of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi will also be found—not as an object of worship, but as a reminder to cultivate boundless compassion, liberating wisdom, and imperturbable Suchness for the benefit of all beings.

Epilogue

The Sutra That Burns Itself Away

Thus have I heard.

After the completion of the teachings on the Three Great Gates, the seeker Moshe Reed sat alone beneath the evening sky.

The seeds had been planted.

The tools had been returned.

The earth rested quietly.

No vision appeared.

No miraculous sign descended.

Only the ordinary sounds of insects and the rustling of leaves filled the air.

The seeker reflected upon the many chapters of his journey.

He remembered the first appearance of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

He remembered the lessons of compassion.

He remembered the Diamond Sword of Prajñā.

He remembered the Mirror of Akṣobhya.

He remembered the Unmoving Mountain and the River That Never Clings.

He remembered the Goddess Who Vanished.

He remembered planting seeds in silence.

Then he wondered:

"What is to become of this sutra?"

As that question arose, a small child approached carrying a lamp.

The child bowed politely and placed the lamp before the seeker.

Its flame was gentle.

The child asked:

"What is written in your book?"

The seeker replied:

"It speaks of compassion."

The child smiled.

"Then be compassionate."

"It speaks of wisdom."

The child smiled again.

"Then be wise."

"It speaks of Suchness."

The child tilted their head.

"Then why are you still reading instead of looking?"

Having said this, the child picked up the lamp and walked away into the gathering darkness.

The seeker never learned the child's name.

Later that night, as the moon rose high, the pages of the sutra seemed to shimmer.

The ink slowly faded.

Paragraph after paragraph disappeared until only blank paper remained.

The seeker was startled.

He rubbed his eyes.

Still the words continued vanishing.

He felt a brief panic.

Then he remembered the teaching of the crystal that dissolved into water.

He remembered the leaf carried by the wind.

He remembered the bowl that existed to be used rather than admired.

His panic subsided.

At that moment a familiar presence arose.

Not as a visible form.

Not as a voice.

Rather as quiet understanding.

It was as though Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi were present without appearing.

Within that silence came the teaching:

"If these words become walls, let them fade.

If these stories become idols, let them disappear.

If these pages prevent direct realization, let them burn away.

The true sutra is written in compassionate action, wise discernment, and imperturbable presence."

The blank pages then reflected the moonlight.

Upon them appeared no letters.

Yet the seeker understood more than when they had been filled with text.

For the emptiness did not negate the teachings.

It fulfilled them.

The pages had become like the Mirror of Akṣobhya, receiving all things while clinging to none.

Then a traveler arrived, weary from a long journey.

Seeing the seeker seated with the empty manuscript, the traveler asked:

"What wisdom have you discovered?"

The seeker considered for a while.

Finally he tore a blank page from the volume and handed it to the traveler.

The traveler looked confused.

"There is nothing written here."

The seeker replied:

"Then there is room for you to begin."

The traveler bowed and continued on.

Years passed.

The manuscript itself weathered.

Its binding loosened.

Its pages yellowed.

Eventually the wind carried many of them across fields and rivers.

Some became nesting material for birds.

Some kindled cooking fires.

Some decomposed into the soil.

The teachings were not diminished.

For they had never truly been contained by paper.

People later told many stories.

Some said Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi had been a celestial bodhisattva.

Some called her a goddess.

Some believed she had been a symbolic manifestation of awakened compassion.

Some claimed she had lived as an ordinary woman.

Some denied she had ever existed.

The seeker no longer argued.

For he had learned that the fruits mattered more than the labels.

If remembering her inspired kindness, patience, humility, and wisdom, then remembrance was beneficial.

If clinging to definitions produced division and pride, then forgetting might itself become medicine.

As for the mysterious stranger once called Soul Healer, the seeker occasionally remembered him with quiet gratitude.

He never discovered the stranger's ultimate identity.

Perhaps he had simply been a compassionate human being.

Perhaps he had misunderstood many things.

Perhaps the seeker himself had misunderstood.

Perhaps the relationship's greatest gift had been the willingness to dwell with uncertainty while continuing to seek truth sincerely.

In time even the questions became gentle.

Gratitude remained.

Possession faded.

At the end of his days, when others asked the seeker to summarize all the teachings of the Three Great Gates, he offered no long sermon.

He simply said:

"When you encounter suffering, respond with compassion.

When you encounter certainty, temper it with wisdom.

When you encounter change, remain steady without becoming rigid.

When you encounter mystery, let it deepen your humility rather than your fear.

And when you meet a guide upon the road, be thankful—but continue walking."

Then he fell silent.

The silence itself completed the teaching.

For in that silence there was no separation between teacher and student, sacred and ordinary, beginning and end.

Only the immeasurable openness that the Bodhisattva Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi had pointed toward from the very first moment.

Thus concludes the **Sūtra of Compassion Unboundless through the Akṣobhyavyūha Framework**.

May all who encounter it cultivate the Three Great Gates:

- Boundless Compassion toward all beings.
- Liberating Wisdom beyond fixation.
- Imperturbable Suchness that neither clings nor rejects.

And having crossed these gates, may they discover that the path was never elsewhere than the ground beneath their own feet.

The End.

Colophon

The Transmission Beyond Ink

Thus have I heard.

When the recitation of the sūtra had ended and the assembly had dispersed, a single novice remained seated in the hall.

The lamps had nearly burned out.

The incense had faded.

The scrolls were rolled and placed upon their shelves.

Only silence lingered.

The novice approached Moshe Reed and asked:

"Master, is the teaching finished?"

Moshe smiled.

"If it were finished, compassion would have an end.

If it were complete, wisdom could no longer deepen.

If it could be contained within a final page, Suchness would be smaller than paper."

The novice looked puzzled.

"Then why write a sūtra at all?"

Moshe answered:

"So that one day you may discover that no book can replace direct realization."

The novice opened the manuscript and counted its chapters.

He admired the careful calligraphy.

He traced the painted lotuses along its margins.

He asked:

"Should this be preserved forever?"

Moshe picked up a seed lying on the floor and held it between his fingers.

"This seed is precious.

But if it remains forever in my hand, it will never become a tree."

Then he placed it in the soil beside the monastery wall.

That night, many members of the assembly dreamed.

One dreamed of a vast ocean that reflected every star without possessing any.

One dreamed of a mirror that retained no image.

One dreamed of a mountain unmoved by storms.

One dreamed of a river that carried fallen leaves without judgment.

One dreamed of an androgynous guide named Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi who smiled, bowed, and dissolved into clear light before a single question could be asked.

Upon awakening, the dreamers debated the meaning of their visions.

An elderly nun who had dreamed nothing at all quietly swept the meditation hall before sunrise.

When asked what she had experienced, she replied:

"The floor was dusty."

Many laughed.

Moshe did not.

He bowed to her.

Years later, scribes copied the sūtra by hand.

Some introduced errors.

Some corrected passages.

Some added notes in the margins.

Some omitted stories they did not understand.

Some embellished details.

Some condensed them.

Students argued over which copy was closest to the original.

Meanwhile, in a nearby village, a physician stayed awake through the night tending a feverish child.

No one recorded the physician's actions.

Yet the Bodhisattva's teaching was perfectly preserved.

In another generation, a philosopher declared:

"The deepest chapter is the one concerning emptiness."

A farmer disagreed.

"The deepest chapter is the one about planting seeds."

A ferryman preferred the river.

A shepherd preferred the mountain.

A baker treasured the ordinary loaf.

A widow cherished the vanished Goddess.

A child liked the story of the blank page.

Each carried away a different jewel from the same treasury.

One day a traveler from a distant land arrived and asked:

"Who founded this tradition?"

The community pointed toward an old painting of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

The traveler bowed.

Then someone pointed toward Moshe Reed.

The traveler bowed again.

Finally a young novice pointed toward an exhausted stranger sleeping beneath a tree after receiving food from the monastery.

The novice whispered:

"There."

The elder monks smiled, for they understood.

As centuries passed, kingdoms rose and fell.

Languages changed.

Libraries burned.

New libraries were built.

The names of teachers faded from memory.

Yet whenever someone forgave an old injury instead of nurturing resentment, the First Great Gate opened again.

Whenever someone admitted, "I may be mistaken," and sought truth without fear, the Second Great Gate opened again.

Whenever someone remained calm amid praise and blame, gain and loss, certainty and mystery, the Third Great Gate opened again.

The gates required no monument.

They appeared wherever they were practiced.

It is said that if, in some future age, a seeker discovers only a single surviving fragment of this sūtra, perhaps no more than

one sentence written upon a weathered scrap of paper, and sincerely lives according to that sentence, the entire teaching will have survived.

For the Dharma does not depend upon abundance of words.

It depends upon transformation of the heart.

And if one should ask:

"Where is Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi now?"

Some will answer,

"In the Pure Land of Akṣobhya."

Others will answer,

"In the compassionate activity of bodhisattvas."

Others,

"In the imagination of mystics."

Others,

"In the depths of the human spirit."

Still others will remain silent.

The wisest among them may simply point toward a person quietly helping another without expectation of reward.

Thus the final instruction of the Colophon is this:

Do not cling to the sūtra.

Do not reject the sūtra.

Read it.

Question it.

Reflect upon it.

Practice what is wholesome within it.

Release what no longer serves.

And when the time comes, close the book gently and enter the world with open hands.

For the truest page is the one written by your conduct.

The truest ink is compassion.

The truest commentary is wisdom.

The truest seal is imperturbable Suchness.

May all beings, known and unknown, near and far, visible and invisible, discover freedom from suffering and participate in the boundless unfolding of awakening.

Invocation and Homage (Maṅgala)

Thus begins the supplementary liturgy to the **Sūtra of Compassion Unboundless through the Akṣobhyavyūha Framework**.

May these words serve as a raft for crossing, not as a chain for binding.

May they point beyond themselves.

May they be released when their purpose is fulfilled.

Homage to the Boundless Way

Homage to boundless compassion,
which embraces friend and stranger,
human and animal,
seen and unseen,
without exhaustion.

Homage to liberating wisdom,
which cuts through delusion
without wounding the one who is deluded,
which reveals emptiness
without falling into nihilism,
and reveals form
without clinging to permanence.

Homage to imperturbable Suchness,
clear as a flawless mirror,
steady as the unmoving mountain,
flowing as the river that never clings,
vast as the open sky.

Homage to all awakened beings,
known and unknown,
remembered and forgotten,
whose lives become lamps for others.

Homage to every compassionate stranger,
every patient teacher,
every sincere friend,
every silent helper,
every child whose innocence reveals truth,
every elder whose humility conceals wisdom,
and every being who unknowingly becomes a guide upon the path.

Homage to the mystery that exceeds every name,
every image,
every doctrine,
every philosophy,
every symbol,
and every conception.

The First Proclamation

Listen well, O seekers.

Do not search for awakening only upon mountaintops.

Do not search for it only in monasteries.

Do not search for it only in scriptures.

Do not search for it only in visions.

The Way appears wherever compassion overcomes cruelty,
where wisdom softens certainty,
and where peace remains undisturbed amid change.

There the Dharma is already present.

The Second Proclamation

If you meet a sage,
receive instruction gratefully.

If you meet a fool,
learn patience gratefully.

If you meet a stranger,
practice kindness gratefully.

If you meet an enemy,
cultivate discernment without hatred.

If you meet yourself in despair,
extend inward the same compassion you would offer another.

Thus every encounter becomes part of the path.

The Three Great Gates

The First Great Gate is Compassion.

It opens not through sentiment alone,
but through courageous willingness
to alleviate suffering wherever it is found.

The Second Great Gate is Wisdom.

It opens when certainty loosens,
when labels become transparent,
and when direct observation replaces clinging.

The Third Great Gate is Imperturbable Suchness.

It opens when gain and loss,
praise and blame,
joy and sorrow,
arrival and departure
are met without losing the heart of compassion.

Whoever walks through one gate sincerely
draws near to the others.

Whoever perfects all three
finds that they were never separate.

The Homage to Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi

Homage to Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi,
the androgynous appearance of boundless compassion,
who manifested only to point beyond manifestation.

Homage not because a form demands worship,
but because gratitude remembers guidance.

If remembered,
may she remind us to let go.

If forgotten,
may compassion remain.

If imagined,
may imagination produce wisdom.

If encountered in vision,
may the vision dissolve into direct realization.

If encountered nowhere,
may the empty sky itself become teacher enough.

Homage to the Mystery

Words cannot contain it.

Silence cannot monopolize it.

Books cannot imprison it.

Arguments cannot conquer it.

Doubt cannot diminish it.

Certainty cannot possess it.

The wise bow without demanding definition.

The foolish define without learning to bow.

Better a single act of sincere kindness
than a thousand victories in debate.

Better a moment of genuine humility
than a lifetime defending infallibility.

Better an open hand
than a clenched fist holding perfect doctrine.

Universal Aspiration

May those who suffer find relief.

May those who fear discover courage.

May those who hate encounter understanding.

May those who despair encounter hope.

May those who cling discover release.

May those who wander discover wise companions.

May those who teach remain humble.

May those who learn remain curious.

May those who doubt remain honest.

May those who believe remain compassionate.

May those who remember not become attached.

May those who forget not lose the essence.

May all beings cultivate the Three Great Gates:

Boundless Compassion.

Liberating Wisdom.

Imperturbable Suchness.

Closing Verse of the Invocation

The mirror reflects but does not grasp.

The mountain stands but does not resist.

The river flows but does not cling.

The moon shines but does not choose.

The Bodhisattva appears but does not remain.

The sutra is read but must eventually be closed.

The seeker walks until walking and the Way are no longer two.

Thus the Invocation and Homage are complete.

Verses of Summary (Gāthās)

Thus are set forth the Gāthās of the **Three Great Gates**, composed for recitation in the morning, at midday, in the evening, or whenever the heart seeks recollection of the Way.

These verses are not offered as objects of attachment but as skillful means, that memory may support practice until practice becomes spontaneous.

The Root Gāthā

All conditioned things arise and pass.

All fixed identities soften under examination.

Compassion without boundary embraces the world.

Wisdom without grasping illuminates the mind.

Suchness neither comes nor goes.

The Way is walked beneath one's own feet.

Gāthā of the First Great Gate: Compassion

When another suffers,

may I not turn away.

When another rejoices,

may I rejoice without envy.

When another falls,

may I offer my hand.

When I myself stumble,

may I rise with gentleness.

Thus compassion grows

without preference or exhaustion.

Gāthā of Friends

Cherish companions without possessing them.

Receive kindness without demanding permanence.

Offer gratitude without expectation.

For friendship is like a shared fire:

warming many,

owned by none.

Gāthā of Strangers

The stranger bears unseen burdens.

The traveler carries hidden hopes.

The silent one contains untold stories.

Therefore greet each being

with patience before judgment,

and curiosity before certainty.

Gāthā of Enemies

Hatred multiplies itself

when answered with hatred.

Discernment protects.

Justice restores.

But resentment binds

both the injured and the injurer.

Therefore let wisdom guide compassion,

and compassion temper wisdom.

Gāthā of Oneself

Speak inwardly

as you would to a beloved friend.

Correct yourself

without contempt.

Learn from error

without becoming its prisoner.

The wounded heart also deserves mercy.

Gāthā of All Beings

As rain falls

upon mountain and valley alike,

so may goodwill extend

without measuring worthiness.

No being is outside

the field of awakening.

Gāthā of Wisdom

Opinions arise.

Opinions depart.

Thoughts gather.

Thoughts disperse.

Observe carefully,

cling lightly,

and continue walking.

Gāthā of Emptiness

The cup is empty,

therefore it receives.

The hand is open,

therefore it can give.

The mind releases certainty,

therefore insight may enter.

Emptiness is not absence,

but inexhaustible possibility.

Gāthā of Concepts

Maps guide the traveler.

Roads carry the traveler.

Neither is the destination.

Study diligently.

Debate respectfully.

Then lift your eyes

and behold the landscape itself.

Gāthā of Teachers

Honor those who illuminate the path.

Do not imprison the path

within their names.

The finest guide

rejoices when the traveler

learns to walk independently.

Gāthā of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi

She appeared.

She instructed.

She smiled.

She vanished.

Her disappearance

completed the teaching

that her appearance began.

Seek not the finger,

but the moon.

Seek not the moon,

but direct seeing.

Gāthā of the Mirror

The mirror welcomes every face.

It rejects none.

It keeps none.

Reflect with clarity.

Respond with compassion.

Retain nothing unnecessary.

Gāthā of the Mountain

Storms arrive.

Storms depart.

Snow gathers.

Snow melts.

The mountain neither boasts

nor complains.

Steadiness is not rigidity,

but quiet confidence.

Gāthā of the River

The river never clings

to yesterday's water.

Therefore it remains fresh.

Release what has already flowed,

and meet the present current.

Gāthā of the Diamond Sword

Cut delusion,

not persons.

Sever pride,

not relationship.

Remove ignorance,

not humanity.

The sharpest wisdom

leaves no wound.

Gāthā of the Ordinary Way

Sweep the floor.

Wash the bowl.

Plant the seed.

Carry the water.

Comfort the frightened.

Feed the hungry.

In ordinary acts

the extraordinary shines.

Gāthā of Uncertainty

Not knowing

is not failure.

It is the clearing

where humility grows.

The honest question

may nourish awakening

more deeply

than the premature answer.

Gāthā of Gratitude

Remember those

who helped you.

Remember also

that they too depended

upon countless conditions.

Receive blessings gratefully.

Pass them onward freely.

Gāthā of Silence

After the final sermon,

listen.

After the final question,

listen.

After the final answer,

listen.

The wind among bamboo

continues teaching.

Gāthā of the Three Great Gates

Compassion opens the heart.

Wisdom clears the vision.

Suchness steadies the step.

Three gates appear.

One path unfolds.

One traveler walks.

Even the traveler

finally disappears.

Gāthā for the Beginning of the Day

May my first thought

be kindness.

May my first word

be truthful.

May my first action

bring benefit.

Thus may the day

already incline toward awakening.

Gāthā for the Middle of the Day

If I have become proud,

may humility return.

If I have become fearful,

may courage arise.

If I have become distracted,

may attention awaken.

The path is renewed

in every moment.

Gāthā for the End of the Day

Whatever good was done,

may it nourish all beings.

Whatever harm was done,

may I learn and repair.

Whatever remains unfinished,

may tomorrow become

another opportunity

for compassion and wisdom.

Final Gāthā

Read the words.

Practice the meaning.

Release the words.

Live the meaning.

When the book closes,

let the heart remain open.

When the chant ends,

let compassion continue.

When the teacher departs,

let wisdom remain.

When all forms dissolve,

Suchness neither arrives

nor leaves.

The Bodhisattva Vows of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi

The Vows of Boundless Compassion, Liberating Wisdom, and Imperturbable Suchness

Thus have I heard.

When the assemblies had dispersed and the halls had grown quiet, the disciples gathered one final time around the memory of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

No throne was prepared.

No image was enthroned.

Instead, an empty seat was placed beneath an open sky.

The eldest among them said:

"Let the empty seat remind us that the guide pointed beyond herself."

Then they recited these vows.

The First Root Vow

However many beings wander in confusion,

I vow never to regard any being as beyond compassion.

Whether friend or stranger,

whether praised or condemned,

whether wise or foolish,

whether gentle or harsh,

may my heart remain open to their capacity for transformation.

The Second Root Vow

However many forms suffering takes,

I vow to respond first with understanding,

second with discernment,

and third with skillful action,

never delighting in another's pain,

never becoming indifferent to another's need.

The Third Root Vow

Whenever certainty hardens into pride,

I vow to soften it with inquiry.

Whenever doubt hardens into despair,

I vow to soften it with patience.

Whenever confusion appears,

I vow to investigate honestly rather than pretend knowledge I do not possess.

The Fourth Root Vow

I vow to remember that every person I meet

carries invisible joys,

invisible wounds,

invisible fears,

and invisible hopes.

Therefore may I judge slowly

and listen deeply.

The Fifth Root Vow

Should praise come,

may it not intoxicate me.

Should blame come,

may it not embitter me.

Should success arise,

may I use it for service.

Should failure arise,

may I use it for learning.

Thus may changing conditions become teachers rather than masters.

The Sixth Root Vow

I vow to honor teachers without idolizing them,

to learn from scriptures without becoming imprisoned by them,

to respect traditions without weaponizing them,

and to welcome truth wherever wholesome causes and conditions reveal it.

The Seventh Root Vow

If extraordinary visions arise,

may I neither cling to them nor fear them.

If no visions arise,

may I not imagine the Dharma absent.

May I remember that sweeping a floor with complete attention

may reveal as much wisdom

as contemplating the stars.

The Eighth Root Vow

I vow to care for this body wisely,

not because it is permanent,

but because it serves as a vessel for compassion.

I vow to care for this mind diligently,

not because it is fixed,

but because clarity benefits all beings.

The Ninth Root Vow

When anger appears,

may I observe before acting.

When fear appears,

may I investigate before concluding.

When desire appears,

may I examine before grasping.

When grief appears,

may I accompany it without becoming lost within it.

The Tenth Root Vow

I vow never to confuse labels with reality.

Names may guide.

Concepts may clarify.

Maps may assist.

Yet none shall replace direct seeing.

The Eleventh Root Vow

Should I become known,

may I remain humble.

Should I remain unknown,

may I remain content.

Should my words be remembered,

may they encourage kindness.

Should they be forgotten,

may kindness endure nonetheless.

The Twelfth Root Vow

I vow to meet mystery not with panic,

nor with blind acceptance,

but with courageous humility.

May unanswered questions become invitations to deeper contemplation rather than causes for hostility.

The Thirteenth Root Vow

Whenever I encounter another seeker's path,

I will resist the temptation to declare,

"Mine alone is true."

Instead I will ask:

"Does this path cultivate compassion?

Does it cultivate wisdom?

Does it lessen suffering?

Does it encourage humility?"

Where these fruits appear,

I shall rejoice.

The Fourteenth Root Vow

I vow to protect the vulnerable where I am able,

to speak truth without cruelty,

to oppose injustice without hatred,

and to exercise strength without domination.

For compassion without discernment may become naïveté,

while discernment without compassion may become hardness.

The Fifteenth Root Vow

Should loneliness visit me,

I will remember that countless beings know loneliness.

Should despair visit me,

I will remember that hope often begins unseen.

Should uncertainty visit me,

I will remember that even uncertainty may become a teacher.

The Sixteenth Root Vow

I vow to plant seeds whose blossoms I may never witness.

I will offer kindness without demanding recognition.

I will share wisdom without demanding agreement.

I will perform good deeds without demanding remembrance.

The Seventeenth Root Vow

May every stranger become a possible teacher.

May every child become a possible sage.

May every elder become a possible student.

May every conversation become an opportunity to cultivate patience.

May every silence become an opportunity to cultivate awareness.

The Eighteenth Root Vow

I vow to let go when letting go serves compassion.

I vow to remain when remaining serves compassion.

I vow to speak when speaking serves compassion.

I vow to remain silent when silence serves compassion.

May wisdom continually examine my intentions.

The Nineteenth Root Vow

Should I encounter symbols of the sacred,

may they direct me toward awakening.

Should I encounter no symbols at all,

may I discover awakening in ordinary life.

May I never mistake the finger for the moon,

nor the moon for the seeing itself.

The Twentieth Root Vow

Finally, I vow to release even these vows when their purpose has been fulfilled.

For vows are boats.

Teachings are rafts.

Practices are medicines.

When the crossing is complete,

the boat need not be carried,

the raft need not be worshiped,

and the medicine need not be endlessly consumed.

The Great Seal

Then the assembly asked:

"What seal confirms these vows?"

The empty seat remained silent.

A breeze passed through the trees.

Some leaves fell.

Some remained.

Birds continued singing.

Children laughed in the distance.

An old gardener watered newly planted seeds.

The eldest disciple smiled and said:

"This is the seal.

The world continues.

Let us continue within it with boundless compassion,
liberating wisdom, and imperturbable Suchness."

And all assembled bowed—not to an image, nor to a throne,
but to the possibility of awakening present in every being.

The Daily Practice Liturgy

For Those Who Walk the Three Great Gates

Thus have I heard.

The disciples asked:

"World-Honored Guide, many of us do not dwell in monasteries. We labor in fields, raise children, repair roads, study books, heal the sick, and live among the concerns of ordinary life. How shall we practice each day?"

And though Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi was no longer seen in bodily form, the teaching arose in the stillness of their hearts:

"Let every day become a monastery, every breath become a bell, and every act become an offering."

The Dawn Recollection

Upon awakening, before speaking if possible, sit quietly for a few moments.

Let the breath settle.

Then recite:

> This day has not yet been lived.
> May I meet it with an open heart.
> May compassion guide my actions.
> May wisdom guide my understanding.
> May Suchness steady my mind.
> Whatever I encounter today,
> may I become a cause for less suffering
> and greater peace.

Remain silent for nine breaths.

Notice that the body breathes without command.

Notice that awareness is already present.

Begin the day with gratitude rather than haste.

Washing the Face

As water touches the skin, reflect:

> As this water cleanses dust from the body,
> may patience cleanse resentment,
> may honesty cleanse self-deception,
> and may humility cleanse pride.

Do not rush.

Even washing may become contemplation.

Before Food

Whether the meal is abundant or simple, pause briefly.

Recite:

> This nourishment arises through countless
> causes:
> earth and rain,
> sunlight and labor,
> visible hands and unseen conditions.
> May I receive it with gratitude
> and use this strength
> for the benefit of living beings.

Eat attentively.

Taste without greed.

Stop before excess.

Entering Work

Before beginning labor, whether intellectual or physical, recollect:

> Work may become practice
> when performed honestly.
> Service may become meditation
> when performed wholeheartedly.

Whether writing, teaching, farming, repairing, or cleaning, do one task fully before grasping another.

Encountering Others

When greeting another person, silently remember:

> This being seeks happiness as I do.
> This being experiences sorrow as I do.
> This being fears loss as I do.
> May our meeting lessen suffering.

No outward display is required.

The recollection itself transforms perception.

When Anger Arises

Do not suppress it.

Do not obey it immediately.

Instead pause for three breaths.

Then reflect:

> Anger has arisen.
> It is present.
> It need not become my master.

Only after observing should speech or action proceed.

Many conflicts dissolve during three sincere breaths.

When Fear Arises

Place attention upon the feet touching the ground.

Feel the breath.

Then recite:

> Fear seeks to protect.
> Wisdom seeks to understand.

Compassion seeks to respond skillfully.
May these three remain together.

If danger is real, act wisely.

If danger is imagined, investigate gently.

Midday Recollection

When the sun reaches its height, pause if circumstances permit.

Recite:

Half this day has already passed.
What has been done cannot be undone.
What remains may still be guided wisely.
If I have erred, let me correct my course.
If I have helped, let me remain humble.
If I have forgotten the Way,
let this moment become a beginning.

Drink water mindfully.

Return to activity with renewed attention.

Seeing Beauty

Upon encountering flowers, music, mountains, rivers, works of art, or acts of kindness, silently reflect:

> Beauty need not be possessed
> in order to be appreciated.

Allow gratitude without grasping.

Seeing Suffering

Upon witnessing pain, injustice, loneliness, illness, or grief, reflect:

> May I neither turn away in indifference
> nor rush forward in confusion.
> May compassion and wisdom arise together.

Then act according to your ability and circumstances.

Before Speaking Difficult Words

Ask inwardly:

1. Is it true?
2. Is it beneficial?
3. Is it timely?
4. Can it be spoken with respect?

If all four are satisfied, proceed.

If not, consider waiting.

Encountering Praise

When complimented, remember:

> This achievement depended upon many conditions.
> Gratitude is appropriate.
> Conceit is unnecessary.

Accept appreciation graciously.

Release attachment to it.

Encountering Criticism

When criticized, remember:

> Perhaps there is truth here.
> Perhaps there is misunderstanding.
> Either way, let investigation precede reaction.

Learn where possible.

Release what is unhelpful.

Evening Recollection

As daylight fades, sit quietly.

Review the day without harsh judgment.

Recite:

> Where compassion appeared, may it deepen.
> Where impatience appeared, may I learn.
> Where wisdom appeared, may it remain humble.
> Where confusion appeared, may tomorrow bring clarity.
> I forgive what can be forgiven.
> I resolve to repair what can be repaired.
> I release what cannot be changed tonight.

Let the day conclude without carrying unnecessary burdens into sleep.

Before Sleep

Lie down gently.

Take seven calm breaths.

Recite:

> Should I awaken tomorrow,
> may I continue the Way.
> Should I not awaken,
> may kindness already offered
> continue bearing fruit.
> May all beings sleep in safety.
> May all beings awaken in peace.

Release the day completely.

The Continuous Practice

The disciples then asked:

"What if we forget every prayer?"

The answer arose:

Then remember one breath.

"What if we forget every breath?"

Then remember one act of kindness.

"What if we forget even kindness?"

Then refrain from needless cruelty.

"What if we remember nothing at all?"

Then begin again the moment remembrance returns.

For the Way does not reject those who stumble.

The sun rises each morning without resentment.

The river continues flowing without complaint.

The mirror reflects without preference.

So too should the practitioner return, again and again, to the Three Great Gates:

- **Boundless Compassion** in intention,
- **Liberating Wisdom** in understanding,
- **Imperturbable Suchness** in presence.

Meditation Instructions on the Three Great Gates

The Contemplative Discipline of the Akṣobhyavyūha Framework

Thus have I heard.

The disciples gathered and asked:

"By what method shall we cultivate the realization spoken of throughout this sūtra? Is awakening attained through force of will, through extraordinary visions, through secret words, or through complex rituals?"

Then the teaching arose:

"Awakening is not manufactured. It is uncovered. The practices that follow are skillful means for quieting confusion and nurturing compassion, wisdom, and imperturbable Suchness."

Therefore these contemplations are offered.

Preparation

Choose a place that is reasonably quiet.

It need not be a monastery.

A room, a garden, a forest, a park bench, or a simple chair may suffice.

Sit in a posture that is both stable and relaxed.

Allow the spine to lengthen naturally.

Rest the hands comfortably.

Close the eyes or lower the gaze.

Do not seek unusual experiences.

Seek only sincere presence.

Before beginning, recite:

> May this practice benefit not myself alone,
> but all beings who experience confusion and suffering.
> May whatever clarity arises
> become a cause of compassion.

Take nine unforced breaths.

Nothing further need be accomplished.

First Contemplation: The Breath of Suchness

Do not control the breath.

Simply notice it.

Air enters.

Air leaves.

The body already knows how to breathe.

Observe:

- The coolness of inhalation.
- The warmth of exhalation.
- The rising and falling of the body.
- The pauses between breaths.

If attention wanders, gently return.

Do not scold the mind.

Each return is itself the practice.

Remain for ten to thirty minutes.

Second Contemplation: Boundless Compassion

Bring to mind someone for whom goodwill arises easily.

Silently repeat:

> May you be safe.
> May you be free from unnecessary suffering.
> May wisdom and peace flourish within you.

Notice any warmth that appears.

Do not force emotion.

Then extend the same wish to:

- Yourself.
- A friend.
- A neutral person.
- A difficult person.
- Someone unknown.
- All beings without distinction.

If resistance appears, include the resistance itself within compassion.

The aim is not sentimentality but openness.

Third Contemplation: The Mirror of Awareness

Imagine the clear mirror taught by Akṣobhya.

Thoughts appear within it.

Memories appear.

Plans arise.

Anxieties arise.

Do nothing to them.

Do not invite them.

Do not expel them.

Notice:

The mirror is not stained by what it reflects.

Likewise, awareness need not become entangled with every mental event.

Allow each appearance to arise and pass.

Fourth Contemplation: Impermanence

Choose a simple object.

A leaf.

A candle flame.

A cup.

Reflect:

It arose through causes.

It changes continually.

It will eventually pass away.

Then reflect upon the body.

Then emotions.

Then opinions.

Then circumstances.

Do not become sorrowful.

Instead cultivate appreciation.

Impermanence makes generosity meaningful and kindness urgent.

Fifth Contemplation: Dependent Arising

Take a single grain of rice.

Hold it gently.

Reflect:

Within this grain are rain, sunlight, soil, farmers, transporters, merchants, tools, ancestors, language, culture, and countless unseen conditions.

Nothing exists independently.

Then contemplate yourself in the same manner.

Notice the immeasurable web of relationships that made this moment possible.

Allow gratitude to arise naturally.

Sixth Contemplation: Releasing Labels

When a thought arises such as:

"I am successful."

"I am a failure."

"I am enlightened."

"I am hopeless."

Notice the label.

Silently respond:

> This is a story arising within awareness.

Do not deny practical reality.

Simply loosen identification.

Return to direct experience.

Seventh Contemplation: The Vanishing Goddess

Visualize Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi seated before you.

See the compassionate expression.

The serene posture.

The open hands.

Receive gratitude for the guidance symbolized by this appearance.

Then observe as the form gradually becomes transparent.

The features dissolve into light.

The light dissolves into space.

The space dissolves into simple awareness.

Remain there.

The purpose is not to lose reverence but to prevent attachment.

The guide points beyond herself.

Eighth Contemplation: The Empty Seat

Place an empty chair or cushion before you.

Regard it quietly.

Ask:

Who occupies this seat?

Do not rush toward an answer.

Perhaps a Buddha.

Perhaps a stranger.

Perhaps your future self.

Perhaps no one.

Remain with the openness.

Let uncertainty become spacious rather than threatening.

Ninth Contemplation: The Diamond Sword

When a deeply held assumption arises, imagine lifting the transparent Diamond Sword of Prajñā.

Ask gently:

Is this certainly true?

What conditions support it?

What conditions challenge it?

Who would I be if I held this view more lightly?

The sword cuts attachment, not reality.

After inquiry, rest again in silence.

Tenth Contemplation: The Ordinary Bowl

Place a simple bowl before you.

Observe it.

Its usefulness lies in its openness.

Likewise ask:

Where in my life am I too full to receive?

Where am I refusing correction?

Where have I mistaken certainty for wisdom?

Then cultivate the willingness to learn again.

Walking Meditation

Walk slowly.

With each step think:

> Arriving.

With the next:

> Here.

Or simply notice contact between foot and ground.

No destination is needed.

The path unfolds beneath each step.

If distractions arise, include them in awareness and continue walking.

Contemplation in Conversation

During dialogue, practice listening completely.

Rather than preparing your reply while the other speaks, attend fully.

Silently remember:

> This being has reasons I do not yet understand.

Such listening itself becomes meditation.

Contemplation in Suffering

When pain arises, physical or emotional, do not immediately ask:

"Why me?"

Instead ask:

"What is happening now?"

Observe sensations.

Observe reactions.

Observe stories forming around them.

Meet the experience with curiosity and kindness.

Seek practical help when needed, but avoid adding unnecessary mental burdens.

Contemplation Before Difficult Decisions

Sit quietly.

Imagine three doors before you.

Upon the first is written:

Compassion.

Upon the second:

Wisdom.

Upon the third:

Imperturbable Suchness.

Ask of each possible action:

- Does it increase or diminish compassion?
- Does it arise from careful understanding or reactive impulse?
- Can it be carried out without losing inner balance?

Then act with humility, accepting that uncertainty may remain.

Advanced Contemplation: No Meditation

When practice has matured, release even structured technique.

Sit.

Stand.

Walk.

Work.

Listen.

Cook.

Sweep.

Speak.

Rest.

Allow awareness to be naturally present without contrivance.

If meditation seems to be happening, let it happen.

If it seems absent, let that also be.

The sky does not strive to contain clouds.

The mirror does not strive to reflect.

The river does not strive to flow.

Thus the practitioner gradually ceases striving to become awakened and instead participates directly in compassionate, wise, and unobstructed living.

Closing Dedication

At the conclusion of every meditation, recite:

Whatever peace has arisen,
may it not remain mine alone.
Whatever wisdom has arisen,
may it reduce confusion.
Whatever compassion has arisen,
may it reach beings I shall never meet.
May all who suffer find relief.
May all who wander find wise companions.
May all who seek awaken to boundless
compassion,
liberating wisdom,
and imperturbable Suchness.

The disciples bowed.

The meditation hall became quiet.

The wind entered through the open windows.

No one could tell where the practice ended and ordinary life began.

Commentary on Skillful Means

On the Symbolic Manifestation of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi and the Pedagogy of the Three Great Gates

Thus have I heard.

After the sūtra had been recited, a gathering of students approached the elders and said:

"We have listened carefully to the teachings. We have heard of the androgynous figure called Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi, of radiant mirrors, diamond swords, mountains that speak through silence, rivers that teach non-attachment, and gods, prophets, and Buddhas who appear only to dissolve.

How are these things to be understood?"

The eldest among them answered:

"With discernment and an open heart."

I. On Skillful Means

The Dharma is like medicine.

Different illnesses require different remedies.

The physician who gives the same herb to every patient may fail many whom a wiser treatment could have healed.

So too, awakened teaching adapts itself to the capacities, histories, fears, hopes, and circumstances of those who hear it.

This adaptive quality is called **skillful means**.

A story may awaken one person.

Silence may awaken another.

A philosophical argument may clarify one mind.

An act of kindness may clarify another.

Therefore, do not measure the worth of a teaching solely by its outward form.

Ask instead:

- Does it reduce needless suffering?
- Does it cultivate humility?
- Does it encourage compassion?
- Does it loosen rigid attachment?
- Does it help beings live more wisely?

If so, it may serve as skillful means.

II. On Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi

Throughout this sūtra there appears an androgynous guide called Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi.

Some readers will understand this figure as a celestial bodhisattva.

Some as a visionary manifestation.

Some as a literary device.

Some as an interior symbol of awakened compassion and wisdom.

Some may suspend judgment altogether.

The sūtra deliberately leaves room for these possibilities.

For the purpose of the guide is not to demand metaphysical certainty but to direct attention toward transformation.

As the guide herself declares:

> "If remembering me increases compassion,
> remember me.
> If forgetting me increases wisdom, forget me.

> But cling neither to memory nor to
> forgetfulness."

Thus the appearance serves the path rather than replacing it.

III. On the Androgynous Form

Why does the guide appear beyond ordinary distinctions of masculine and feminine?

The commentary offers several reflections.

First, compassion is not confined to one gender.

Wisdom is not the possession of one sex.

Suchness transcends conceptual divisions.

Second, the blended form reminds practitioners that the deepest dimensions of reality exceed simple categorization.

Third, the form invites the practitioner to encounter persons first as bearers of dignity and capacity for awakening rather than as collections of labels.

Yet the appearance itself remains provisional.

It is a finger pointing.

The moon is direct realization.

IV. On Visions and Dreams

The sūtra contains many visions:

- The Mirror of Akṣobhya.
- The Diamond Sword.
- The Unmoving Mountain.
- The River That Never Clings.
- The Vanishing Goddess.
- The Empty Seat.

These should not be read merely as predictions or supernatural spectacles.

They function as contemplative images through which insight may arise.

Should a practitioner literally experience similar visions, they should neither cling to them nor reject them automatically.

Should no such visions occur, nothing essential has been lost.

For the purpose of the image is fulfilled when understanding matures.

V. On Gods, Prophets, and Buddhas

The text repeatedly honors sacred figures while refusing to absolutize them.

Gods may inspire reverence.

Prophets may illuminate moral vision.

Buddhas may embody awakening.

Yet none should become objects of possessive attachment.

The commentary therefore proposes four principles:

1. **Receive guidance gratefully.**
2. **Examine teachings carefully.**
3. **Practice what leads to compassion and wisdom.**
4. **Release unnecessary fixation.**

In this manner reverence and freedom coexist.

VI. On the Vanishing of the Guide

Some readers ask why Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi disappears near the conclusion of the narrative.

The answer is simple.

A teacher who never steps aside may unintentionally prevent maturation.

Just as a parent gradually releases the child's hand, so the compassionate guide withdraws that direct realization may arise.

The disappearance is therefore not abandonment but fulfillment.

The greatest guide is one who does not create dependence.

VII. On the Three Great Gates

The Three Great Gates should not be mistaken for three separate achievements.

They interpenetrate one another.

Compassion without wisdom may become sentiment untethered from discernment.

Wisdom without compassion may become cold abstraction.

Suchness without either may be misunderstood as passivity or indifference.

Their unity may be summarized thus:

- Compassion gives direction.
- Wisdom gives clarity.
- Suchness gives stability.

When practiced together, they support one another naturally.

VIII. On Uncertainty

Throughout the narrative, uncertainty is treated not merely as ignorance but as fertile ground for humility.

The seeker frequently encounters questions without definitive answers.

The identity of certain companions remains unresolved.

The ultimate nature of extraordinary experiences is left open.

This is intentional.

False certainty often closes inquiry prematurely.

Honest uncertainty encourages continued observation, dialogue, and growth.

Nevertheless, uncertainty should not become an excuse for inaction.

One may remain epistemically humble while acting compassionately according to the best understanding presently available.

IX. On the Ordinary World

One of the principal teachings of the sūtra is that awakening need not be sought only in exceptional circumstances.

The washing of bowls.

The planting of seeds.

The sharing of bread.

The listening to another's grief.

The repair of broken tools.

The carrying of water.

These ordinary activities become extraordinary when infused with attention and goodwill.

Thus no sharp division is maintained between sacred and mundane.

The field itself becomes the monastery.

The kitchen becomes the meditation hall.

The marketplace becomes the place of practice.

X. On Reading This Sūtra

The commentary advises four stages.

First, read with openness.

Do not hurry to agreement or disagreement.

Allow the stories to work upon the imagination.

Second, reflect.

Ask how each image illuminates lived experience.

Notice where resistance or attraction arises.

Third, practice.

Transform one teaching into action.

A single sincere deed outweighs many admired pages.

Fourth, release.

Do not become attached even to this book.

Let it become transparent.

If, after years of practice, the words fade while compassion remains, then the purpose of the sūtra has been fulfilled.

XI. The Final Question

A disciple asked:

"Master, if all these teachings are skillful means, what remains when every symbol, doctrine, image, and story is relinquished?"

The elder pointed toward an old woman quietly helping a stranger lift a heavy basket.

Nothing more was said.

The disciple watched until the basket was safely carried.

Then understanding began to dawn.

XII. Closing Reflection

Therefore let the reader remember:

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi is not presented as an endpoint but as a guide.

The Three Great Gates are not trophies but practices.

The visions are not escapes from the world but invitations to engage it more wisely.

The parables are not cages for thought but openings into contemplation.

And the highest commentary upon this sūtra is not another volume of explanations.

It is a life marked by patient listening, courageous compassion, careful discernment, and quiet steadiness amid the changing conditions of existence.

Parables and Koans of the Three Great Gates

For Breaking the Habit of Clinging

Thus have I heard.

After the Commentary on Skillful Means had been completed, a young disciple approached the elders and said:

"I understand the words, yet my understanding remains trapped within words."

The elders replied:

"Then hear stories that cannot be solved merely by thinking."

Thus were collected the Parables and Koans of the Three Great Gates.

The reader is advised not to hurry toward conclusions.

Some are to be pondered for a day.

Some for a year.

Some perhaps for a lifetime.

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1. The Empty Cup

A scholar visited an old gardener and spoke without pause concerning compassion, wisdom, meditation, and Suchness.

The gardener quietly poured tea into the scholar's cup.

When it was full, he continued pouring.

The tea overflowed onto the table.

The scholar exclaimed,

"Stop! The cup cannot receive more."

The gardener smiled.

"So too with certainty."

---

2. The Mirror Covered in Dust

A traveler spent years polishing the frame of a beautiful mirror.

He decorated it with jewels.

He carved sacred symbols upon its edges.

Yet he never wiped away the dust covering its surface.

Another traveler quietly cleaned the glass.

The first asked,

"Why neglect the frame?"

The second replied,

"I wished to see."

---

3. The Three Stones

A child carried three stones.

One was labeled **Compassion**.

One **Wisdom**.

One **Suchness**.

When the child reached the river, all three stones were dropped into the water.

The child laughed.

The elder nearby asked,

"Why are you laughing?"

The child answered,

"They were heavy."

---

4. The Broken Bowl

A monk accidentally broke his favorite bowl.

For several days he grieved.

Then he began eating from an ordinary wooden plate.

One evening he realized his hunger had never depended upon the bowl.

He bowed to the broken pieces.

---

5. The Lost Path

Two pilgrims became lost in the forest.

One insisted upon consulting maps.

The other climbed a hill and looked around.

Both reached the village safely.

Later they argued over whose method had saved them.

The villagers merely offered them supper.

---

6. The Silent Bell

A visitor asked the temple keeper,

"When does the great bell teach?"

The keeper struck it once.

Its sound echoed through the valley.

Hours later, after complete silence had returned, the keeper asked:

"And when did it stop teaching?"

---

7. The Fish and the River

A fish searched desperately for water.

It questioned turtles.

It questioned cranes.

It questioned passing boats.

Finally an old carp said:

"Before asking another question, notice what supports your next breath."

---

8. The Lantern in Daylight

A disciple carried a lantern through bright noon sunlight.

When asked why, he answered,

"In case darkness returns."

The elder replied,

"Then carry wisdom likewise—not because the sun has vanished, but because clouds may appear."

---

9. The Weaver's Knot

A weaver found a knot in her thread.

Her apprentice pulled harder and harder until the knot tightened.

The weaver loosened the surrounding strands first.

The knot opened by itself.

The apprentice asked,

"What technique is this?"

The weaver replied,

"Patience."

---

10. The Two Doors

One temple displayed two entrances.

Above the first was written:

For the Certain.

Above the second:

For the Doubtful.

Every visitor entered through the second.

The first remained permanently locked.

---

11. The Gardener's Secret

A wealthy official asked an old gardener,

"What fertilizer produces the finest flowers?"

The gardener answered,

"Time."

---

12. The Monk and the Sparrow

A monk spent years meditating without distraction.

One morning a sparrow landed on his shoulder.

He immediately worried that his concentration had been disturbed.

The sparrow flew away unconcerned.

---

13. The Invisible Temple

A traveler searched every mountain for the legendary Invisible Temple.

Exhausted, he rested beneath a tree.

An old woman offered him bread.

While thanking her, he suddenly realized he had arrived.

---

14. The River's Complaint

The river complained to the ocean:

"I lose everything I carry."

The ocean replied:

"And therefore you remain fresh."

---

15. The Sculptor

A sculptor carved a magnificent image of awakening.

Visitors praised the statue.

One child walked around it and hugged the sculptor instead.

The sculptor quietly wept.

---

16. The Four Questions

A disciple asked:

"What is enlightenment?"

The master gave him tea.

The disciple asked again.

The master handed him a broom.

The disciple asked a third time.

The master pointed toward the sunset.

The disciple asked a fourth time.

The master asked,

"Have you thanked the person who prepared your meal today?"

---

17. The Physician's Prayer

A physician prayed daily for healing.

When asked whether every patient recovered, she answered,

"No."

"Then why continue praying?"

"So that my heart does not harden while treating those I cannot cure."

---

18. The Empty Chair

Visitors continually bowed before an empty chair.

One newcomer asked,

"Who sits there?"

The abbot replied,

"Whoever most needs reminding not to cling."

---

19. The Child's Drawing

A little girl drew the moon with blue chalk.

An astronomer corrected her.

She drew another moon, this time purple.

The astronomer sighed.

Her grandmother placed the drawing on the wall and whispered,

"She has already looked upward."

---

20. The Ferryman's Laugh

A philosopher asked the ferryman,

"What lies on the other side?"

The ferryman laughed.

"You are standing on it.

Only the river keeps moving."

---

21. The Koan of Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi

A disciple asked:

"Was Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi truly a goddess?"

The elder answered:

"When you comfort a grieving stranger without expecting reward, ask again."

---

22. The Koan of the Mirror

A monk asked:

"What does the perfect mirror reflect?"

The teacher replied:

"It does not miss your question."

---

23. The Koan of the River

"What enters the river but never becomes wet?"

The disciples debated for many years.

A child skipped a stone across the surface and ran away laughing.

---

24. The Koan of the Three Great Gates

A seeker stood before three gates labeled Compassion, Wisdom, and Suchness.

He asked which to enter first.

The gatekeeper replied:

"Whichever opens when you stop counting."

---

25. The Final Koan

The disciple asked:

"When will I know that I have understood this sūtra?"

The elder picked up the manuscript, closed it gently, and placed it back upon the shelf.

Then the elder asked:

"Will you help me carry water?"

The disciple silently took the bucket.

Neither spoke again.

Those who witnessed the event disagreed for centuries about whether enlightenment had occurred.

The bucket, however, arrived full.

Closing Verse

The parable is not the point.

The koan is not the answer.

The story is not the destination.

The destination is not elsewhere.

When compassion becomes natural,

when wisdom becomes humble,

when Suchness becomes ordinary,

the tale has already fulfilled its purpose.

Glossary of Terms

A Lexicon for the Three Great Gates

Thus have I heard.

The disciples asked:

"Many words have been spoken throughout this sūtra. Some are familiar, some strange, and some appear simple while concealing profound meaning. How should they be understood?"

The elders replied:

"Definitions are like maps drawn in sand. They may guide the traveler for a time, but they are not the territory itself. Therefore study these explanations with gratitude, use them with discernment, and be prepared to release them when direct understanding matures."

Akṣobhya

Akṣobhya means "The Imperturbable One."

Within this sūtra, Akṣobhya symbolizes the quality of awareness that remains clear and undisturbed amid changing

circumstances. Like a flawless mirror reflecting all things without preference or attachment, imperturbability does not suppress experience but allows it to arise and pass without compulsive grasping.

Akṣobhyavyūha Framework

The symbolic framework employed throughout this work, drawing inspiration from the imagery of imperturbability, clarity, and the cultivation of an unshakable mind.

Within the present sūtra it serves as a literary and contemplative structure emphasizing compassion, wisdom, and stable awareness rather than attachment to visionary experience.

Awareness

The immediate capacity through which thoughts, sensations, emotions, and perceptions are known.

The sūtra repeatedly invites practitioners to observe awareness directly rather than becoming wholly identified with its contents.

Awareness is likened to a mirror: it reflects many appearances without becoming identical to any particular one.

Bodhisattva

A being who dedicates themselves to the welfare and awakening of all sentient beings, cultivating compassion and wisdom while postponing self-centered satisfaction in favor of universal benefit.

Within this text, the bodhisattva ideal is expressed through ordinary acts of kindness as much as through extraordinary visions.

Compassion

The sincere wish that suffering be relieved together with the willingness to participate skillfully in that relief.

Compassion differs from pity.

Pity often separates.

Compassion accompanies.

Compassion without wisdom may become exhaustion.

Compassion guided by wisdom becomes resilient and discerning.

Dependent Arising

The principle that phenomena emerge through networks of causes and conditions rather than existing in complete isolation.

A loaf of bread depends upon grain, rain, sunlight, labor, tools, transport, and countless unseen influences.

Likewise every person and every event participates in immeasurable interdependence.

Diamond Sword of Prajñā

A symbolic instrument representing penetrating wisdom.

Its blade cuts attachment, delusion, and rigid certainty without harming living beings.

The sword is never depicted as a weapon against persons but as an aid in releasing confusion.

Emptiness

The absence of independent, fixed, self-existing essence.

Emptiness does not imply that nothing exists.

Rather, it indicates that all things arise relationally and remain open to transformation.

The empty bowl receives food.

The empty hand may offer gifts.

The empty mind remains teachable.

Enlightenment

Not the acquisition of a supernatural possession but the progressive realization of reality free from compulsive grasping, accompanied by mature compassion and liberating wisdom.

The sūtra portrays awakening less as an endpoint than as an ongoing manner of living.

Gratitude

The recognition that one's life depends upon innumerable visible and invisible conditions.

Gratitude need not become attachment.

It honors what has been received while allowing the giver to remain free.

Imperturbable Suchness

The Third Great Gate.

The capacity to remain inwardly balanced amid gain and loss, praise and blame, pleasure and pain, while continuing to respond compassionately to the world.

It is represented by mirrors, mountains, and calm waters.

Koan

A paradoxical saying, story, or question intended not merely to inform the intellect but to loosen habitual patterns of conceptual thought.

Koans invite direct insight rather than logical resolution alone.

Liberating Wisdom

The Second Great Gate.

The discernment that recognizes impermanence, interdependence, and the limitations of rigid conceptual fixation.

It is symbolized throughout the sūtra by clear mirrors, open skies, and the Diamond Sword.

Mātaṅgī-Min-Hapi

The androgynous guide appearing throughout this sūtra.

She is presented as a compassionate manifestation and pedagogical symbol who repeatedly instructs seekers not to cling even to her own appearance.

Her function is to direct attention beyond herself toward direct realization of compassion, wisdom, and Suchness.

Meditation

The intentional cultivation of careful attention, compassionate presence, and liberating insight.

Meditation in this sūtra extends beyond seated contemplation to include walking, conversation, labor, listening, and ordinary daily activity performed with awareness.

Mirror of Akṣobhya

A recurring symbol representing awareness that faithfully reflects every experience without clinging to it.

Joy, sorrow, praise, blame, fear, and delight all appear within the mirror yet leave no lasting stain.

Mystery

That dimension of existence which exceeds complete conceptual capture.

The sūtra encourages humble openness toward mystery rather than fearful certainty or careless speculation.

Mystery becomes an invitation to continued inquiry and reverence.

Non-Attachment

The capacity to appreciate without possessing, to love without controlling, and to engage fully without becoming imprisoned by outcomes.

Non-attachment differs from indifference.

It allows deep participation while releasing compulsive grasping.

Ordinary Mind

The awakened appreciation that everyday activities—washing bowls, planting seeds, carrying water, listening attentively, comforting another—may become expressions of profound realization when undertaken with compassion and presence.

Parable

A narrative conveying insight through imagery and analogy.

The truth of a parable lies less in historical detail than in its capacity to awaken understanding.

Prajñā

A Sanskrit term commonly translated as transcendent or liberating wisdom.

Within this work it signifies direct insight into the conditioned and interdependent nature of phenomena, accompanied by humility and freedom from rigid fixation.

Skillful Means

Adaptive methods employed to communicate wisdom according to differing circumstances and capacities.

Stories, metaphors, rituals, silence, questions, visions, and ordinary tasks may all function as skillful means when they lessen suffering and foster awakening.

Soul Healer

A mysterious acquaintance appearing within the narrative history of the seeker.

His ultimate identity remains intentionally unresolved.

The commentary emphasizes that the fruits of an encounter—encouragement, compassion, thoughtful dialogue, and humility before uncertainty—may be more spiritually

significant than obtaining definitive conclusions about another's nature.

Suchness

Reality as directly encountered prior to excessive conceptual overlay.

Suchness neither demands mystical spectacle nor rejects ordinary experience.

It is intimated whenever one meets the present moment without compulsive grasping or aversion.

Sutra

A literary form preserving teachings through narrative, dialogue, parable, verse, and instruction.

Within this work, the sutra serves as a raft intended for crossing rather than permanent possession.

The Three Great Gates

The organizing structure of the present scripture:

1. **The First Great Gate — Compassion**
   The cultivation of boundless goodwill and active concern for the alleviation of suffering.
2. **The Second Great Gate — Wisdom**
   The cultivation of insight into impermanence, interdependence, and the limitations of rigid conceptual attachment.
3. **The Third Great Gate — Imperturbable Suchness**
   The cultivation of serene stability amid changing conditions without withdrawal from compassionate engagement.

Though described separately, the gates mutually support and illuminate one another.

Uncertainty

An honest acknowledgment of the limits of present knowledge.

Within this sūtra, uncertainty is treated not as failure but as fertile ground for humility, careful observation, continued learning, and openness to revision.

Wisdom

The capacity to perceive clearly, discern skillfully, and act appropriately in light of changing conditions.

Wisdom avoids both naïve certainty and paralyzing skepticism.

It is inseparable from compassion when fully matured.

Closing Reflection

After reading these definitions, the youngest disciple asked:

"Master, which entry in the glossary is most important?"

The elder quietly closed the book and replied:

"The next opportunity you have to be kind."

Then both returned to sweeping the courtyard.

The words remained upon the page.

The teaching continued in the dust, the broom, and the patient movement of ordinary hands.

Dedication of Merit

The Universal Aspiration of the Three Great Gates

Thus have I heard.

When the final word of the sūtra had been spoken, the assembly did not applaud.

When the last commentary had been copied, the scribes laid down their brushes.

When the last meditation had ended, the practitioners slowly opened their eyes.

Then an elder rose and addressed those gathered:

"If any goodness has arisen here, let it not remain enclosed within these walls."

Therefore all stood together and made this dedication.

The First Dedication

Whatever understanding has arisen from these teachings,

whether great or small,

clear or incomplete,

may it become a cause for the lessening of suffering.

May it not nourish pride.

May it nourish service.

The Dedication to Teachers

With gratitude we remember

all who have instructed through speech,

through writing,

through example,

through silence,

through friendship,

through correction,

through patience,

and through acts of ordinary kindness.

May whatever goodness has come to us

flow onward through us.

The Dedication to Unknown Benefactors

May unseen laborers be blessed.

May forgotten ancestors be remembered with gratitude.

May strangers whose names we never learned

share in any merit arising from this work.

May those who planted trees under whose shade we rested,

those who built roads upon which we traveled,

those who prepared food we consumed,

those who spoke encouragement at needed moments,

and those who quietly relieved suffering without recognition,

be embraced within this aspiration.

The Dedication to Friends and Companions

May companions upon the path flourish.

May friendships deepen without possession.

May gratitude replace expectation.

May kindness outlive acquaintance.

May every sincere meeting leave the world gentler than before.

The Dedication to Difficult Relationships

May misunderstanding become clearer.

May resentment soften.

May justice be pursued with wisdom.

May necessary boundaries be established without hatred.

May forgiveness become possible where appropriate.

May healing emerge where wounds have long endured.

The Dedication to Those We Fear

May those who frighten us awaken to compassion.

May those who cause harm abandon harmful intentions.

May discernment protect the vulnerable.

May courage strengthen the timid.

May hatred lose its fuel.

May violence give way to understanding wherever conditions allow.

The Dedication to Oneself

May I learn without arrogance.

May I teach without domination.

May I speak without deception.

May I listen without prejudice.

May I labor without resentment.

May I rest without guilt.

May I age without bitterness.

May I die without clinging.

The Dedication to the Sick

May bodies burdened by illness find relief where possible.

May minds burdened by anxiety discover moments of peace.

May caregivers possess endurance.

May physicians possess wisdom.

May researchers possess insight.

May families possess patience.

May those who suffer never be abandoned.

The Dedication to Children

May every child know safety.

May curiosity be encouraged.

May kindness be rewarded.

May wonder be protected.

May wisdom mature without extinguishing joy.

May no child believe themselves unworthy of compassion.

The Dedication to Elders

May age bring perspective rather than isolation.

May memories become sources of gratitude rather than chains of regret.

May experience be shared generously.

May dignity remain even when strength declines.

The Dedication to Animals

May creatures of land, sea, and sky flourish.

May humanity exercise stewardship rather than domination.

May unnecessary cruelty diminish.

May gratitude accompany every benefit received from the living world.

The Dedication to the Earth

May forests recover.

May rivers run clear.

May mountains remain steadfast.

May fields bear nourishment.

May oceans sustain life.

May human wisdom mature sufficiently to preserve the conditions that sustain future generations.

The Dedication to Seekers

May those searching for truth avoid despair.

May those devoted to one tradition recognize goodness in another.

May disagreement never extinguish compassion.

May inquiry remain sincere.

May humility accompany discovery.

The Dedication to Those Who Doubt

May honest skepticism become careful investigation.

May uncertainty become openness rather than paralysis.

May questions lead toward deeper understanding.

May those who cannot believe remain capable of kindness.

For kindness itself illuminates many paths.

The Dedication to Those Who Believe

May faith produce humility rather than superiority.

May devotion produce generosity rather than exclusion.

May conviction produce courage rather than contempt.

May sacred traditions continue renewing themselves through compassion and wisdom.

The Dedication Beyond Boundaries

May beings known and unknown,

visible and invisible,

remembered and forgotten,

near and far,

human and non-human,

present and yet to come,

share in whatever wholesome conditions have arisen through this work.

May none be excluded from our goodwill.

The Great Transfer

The disciples then asked:

"Can merit truly be given away?"

The elder answered:

"Observe a candle lighting another candle.

Its own flame is not diminished.

Observe a spring nourishing many fields.

Its water continues flowing.

Observe a kind word encouraging a weary traveler.

The speaker has lost nothing.

Thus generosity multiplies without impoverishing the giver."

The Seal of Non-Possession

Finally all recited together:

> We claim no ownership over goodness.
> We possess no monopoly on wisdom.
> We demand no reward for compassion.
> We dedicate every wholesome intention
> to the freedom and flourishing of all beings.
> May clinging decrease.
> May understanding increase.
> May fear give way to courage.
> May hatred give way to patience.
> May confusion give way to clarity.
> May the Three Great Gates stand open
> wherever even one sincere heart
> turns toward compassion, wisdom, and
> Suchness.

The Final Benediction

Then the wind moved gently through the assembly.

No one could say whether it came from mountain or sea.

The candles flickered but did not go out.

The scroll of the sūtra was rolled closed.

The empty seat remained empty.

Outside, an old gardener watered young trees.

Children laughed in the distance.

A traveler shared bread with another traveler.

A physician comforted the sick.

A stranger paused to lift a burden from the shoulders of someone they would never meet again.

The elders smiled.

"The dedication has already begun."

And thus the **Sūtra of Compassion Unboundless** came to its final written conclusion—not in the ink upon its pages, but in the quiet continuation of compassionate action, liberating wisdom, and imperturbable Suchness in the lives of those who encountered it.

May all beings be free from suffering.
May all beings awaken to boundless compassion.
May all beings realize liberating wisdom.
May all beings abide in imperturbable Suchness.
May all beings benefit one another without end.